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CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN



A. WERNER

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CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

A STORY OF CENTRAL AFRICA

BY

A. WERNER

AUTHOR OF 'THE CAPTAIN OF THE LOCUSTS,' ETC.



LONDON
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1901

AKW1038

TO

M. H. W.

*Take this tale of a land
You love, though you saw it never :
The land of the sun and the sand,
The land of the strong right hand,—
The country where true hearts break,—
But the true hearts love it ever !*

*The land that holds one grave,
And untold ages of sorrow
Dark with deeds of the night,
And crying towards the light,—
And what it yet shall be
We shall know in God's to-morrow.*

April 19, 1901.

N O T E

It seems desirable to state, for the benefit of those who may recognise some points in this veracious narrative, that the writer is aware that the small island in Lake Nyasa is more correctly spelt Chizumulu, and that it contains neither church nor Archdeacon, and, in fact, scarcely one (if so many) of the features ascribed to it in the story. We must also ask the reader to refrain from the unwarranted inference that Chisimulu is 'meant for' Likoma, an island rejoicing in both the above-mentioned appurtenances. The writer has never seen Likoma; consequently, were the description intended, it would be found incorrect in a hundred particulars. Chisimulu and *this* Archdeacon are, like Miss Meadows and the girls, 'in de tale, honey.' So is Chapenga, though

the critics I have in mind may possibly remember *a* Chapenga in many respects like this one, whose career has mainly been a downward course, and who may even now be loafing about Mandala under the influence of drink. He is no relation.

CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

I

THIS story might just as well be called 'Beckford's *Enfant Terrible*,' or 'Imp of Darkness,' for that matter, seeing that Chapenga was known to his master's friends by both these titles indifferently. But while plenty of people can be found to relate it from Beckford's point of view or that of his friends, the other side of the case is not so well represented, and it seems only fair to give Chapenga a chance.

Chapenga's nationality is more or less a matter of conjecture. Beckford himself, uncertain whether the boy was a Konde, Wanda, Henga, or something else, called him comprehensively a 'North - Ender.' What seems tolerably clear is, that some time in the year 1886 a small and very skinny brown creature,

2 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

with a shock head, and his two upper front teeth chipped away so as to make a V-shaped gap, and nothing on but a dirty bit of calico round his waist, might have been seen playing about the fires of Mlozi's camp near Mpata, at the North End, which in this story always means the north end of Lake Nyasa in Central Africa. He was part of the spoil of some village that Mlozi and his men had raided; his parents had been killed in the night attack; and if he had any brothers and sisters—Beckford used to say that he trusted, for the sake of humanity in general, Chapenga was an only child—nobody knows what became of them.

So Chapenga became the property of Saidi, son of Abdalla, and had to make himself generally useful—carrying Saidi's personal effects on the march, spreading his sleeping-mat at night, handing his pipe and his coffee, washing up the cups, and cleaning out the pots after the women had done cooking. This last occupation involved the eating of whatever rice or porridge was left in the pots, and was an important item to Chapenga: for he got no regular meals. He was allowed to dispute with the other

boys the remains of their masters' dinners, and every now and then one of the women—they were always kind to him, poor souls—would give him a bowl of porridge or the like; and he devoured all the stray sweet potatoes and cobs of maize he could lay hands on. He was thin when first caught, and this régime did not tend to make him fatter.

Saidi was not a nice man. He was big and fat and copper-coloured, with sly little eyes and a sullen, cruel face, and he kept a nasty hippo-hide whip to use on little boys who did not please him. He had other pleasant little ways, which at night—when, being crowded away from the fires by the grown-up men, the boys lay huddled together in some corner like a litter of kittens—the elder ones would relate, in the most vivid and minute detail, in order to curdle the blood of the younger. And I am afraid that oftener than was good for him Chapenga fell asleep reflecting, between his tugs at the next boy's bit of ragged blanket, that the very most delightful thing in all the world—next to a big, warm blanket and no one to take it from him—would be to have a nice long, sharp knife

4 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

and stick it into the fat person of Saidi bin Abdalla.

And yet, in a sort of way, this big, unpleasant Arab was a little afraid of Chapenga. He was a rather stupid man, and Chapenga was very much the reverse. He was very handy and useful when he chose, and had the native gift of mimicry developed to an extraordinary degree; so that he was a never-failing source of amusement to the Arabs, who, after laughing till they were nearly ill at his comical dances and imitations of this or that person—absent, of course—were always ready to interfere in his favour when Saidi was out of temper.

Thanks to these various causes and his own tolerably clear perception of the exact length to which he might safely go, he still possessed a whole skin, though Saidi, as everybody knew, thought nothing of throwing a knife at a boy who provoked him, and only thought twice about firing a gun at him if his stock of ammunition was running short.

But when the month of Ramadan came, it did not improve Saidi's temper. It is difficult to be amiable under any circumstances, when

you may neither eat, drink, nor smoke from sunrise to sunset, without even the consolation of the days being short; for they never are very short in that region, even in June, when the Fast fell that year. Chapenga, being a Mshenzi, or pagan (as Saidi reminded him with additional epithets at least a dozen times a day), was not expected to fast; though that, for obvious reasons, made little difference to him. Therefore he was in a position to appreciate the humorous side of things, and, perching himself in some convenient place with his head on one side, and very much the air of a pensive cock-sparrow, would survey those wretched men with gentle commiseration till human nature could stand it no longer, and it rained slippers, sticks, and boxes on the ears. Then he was fain to make himself scarce, but not before he had stored up in the most retentive of memories every detail of the scene, to be reproduced afterwards, as the occasion would serve.

What was the extent of Saidi's religion it would be hard to say. I am inclined to think it chiefly consisted in telling Chapenga that he would go to Jehannum when his earthly career

6 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

was at an end, and enumerating with photographic realism the details of what would happen to him when he got there. It is certain that he did not always remember the hours of prayer, and Chapenga took a pleasure in reminding him, with unnecessary emphasis, when they were due. I rather think, moreover, that, had he got the chance, Saidi would not have been above taking 'little whacks' on the sly, all through Ramadan. But life at Mlozi's was too public; and there were rich Arabs there, with whom he was the more anxious to stand well because he knew some of them did not like him. For Arabs—even Arabs engaged in the slave-trade—are not necessarily brutes.

It was afternoon; Saidi was sitting with his chin on his knees under the eaves of his hut, inside Mlozi's *boma*. He was feeling very wretched, for Ramadan had now lasted over a week, and, being a big man, he required a good deal of sustenance; moreover, he dared not grumble aloud, with the calm eyes of Omar the Muscati upon him. Sheikh Omar was a very elegant old gentleman indeed, in a snow-white shirt and black jacket, and a large green

silk turban, beautifully embroidered. He was a real Arab, no darker than a Spaniard, while Saidi was deep copper colour—nearly black, in fact—and he had keen, dark eyes, and a hooked nose, and a long white beard flowing down over his breast. His hands—which were a standing wonder to Chapenga by reason of the carefully-trimmed nails and the signet-ring on his right thumb—rested on his knee, as he sat in the doorway of the hut opposite Saidi's, and the beads of his rosary slipped slowly through his fingers one by one. As a matter of fact, though Saidi felt uneasy under his gaze, he was not thinking of Saidi at all—perhaps he did not even see him. For it was no mechanical exercise when Omar repeated the Ninety-nine Names, and he liked to lose himself in thoughts about their meaning.

Chapenga and some other boys were roasting sweet potatoes among the dying embers of a fire at a little distance, Chapenga nudging the rest from time to time to call attention to the woebegone aspect of his master. Whether the sweet potatoes were unusually abundant, and so, according to Mr. Bumble's theory,

conducive to abnormal wickedness, or whether he was encouraged by the suppressed applause of his companions, I cannot say ; but after awhile he grew bolder, and sitting down just under the eaves of the hut, only a few yards from the unconscious Saidi, he mimicked his attitude and expression with such absurdities of exaggeration that the boys rolled on the ground in convulsions of laughter, and the boys' masters—such of them as were in sight—stood grinning in silence ; while from another hut, in front of which two women had been pounding corn for the meal at night, came shrill little screams and splutterings and suppressed hysterical giggles. Omar, recalled from his meditations by these various sounds, remained impassive, except for the suspicion of a twinkle under his bushy white eyebrows. Saidi was too sulky to notice anything for some time ; but at last a sudden misgiving seized him : he shifted his position enough to see, with the tail of his eye, what made him roll to his feet in a fury.

‘Child of Satan!’ he roared, ‘thou shalt pay for this impudence. I will——’

‘Let the child be, Bwana Saidi,’ said Sheikh Omar quietly.

‘Bwana, he is the most unprofitable of all slaves,’ returned Saidi sullenly, and not unlike a chidden slave himself. ‘His parents—may they both be burned for ever!—were dogs, and he is worse than a dog: he is——’

But the slight frown on the old man’s face seemed to paralyze Saidi’s tongue, and he relapsed into silence, instead of, as was his wont, commenting on Chapenga’s character and actions in language which, had he been an Englishman, would certainly have been actionable.

‘A good master makes good servants,’ remarked old Omar sententiously. And Chapenga, who had got over his momentary fright, and felt strong in the protection of Omar’s presence, turned round to his companions, and said, with an excellent imitation of the old gentleman’s manner:

‘The slaves of Bwana Saidi are all bad slaves. And why, my brothers? Because they have not a good master!’

‘Thou hearest, Bwana?’ grumbled Saidi. ‘Shall I endure the insolence of this thing?’

He is saucy with much food, while we are all fasting like good Muslims; but, by Allah and the Prophet——'

Saidi was stout and lazy, but he could be active on occasion, and there was a sudden howl and scattering of small boys from their crouching position round the fire, as his staff descended impartially on skinny backs and sharp shoulder-blades. Chapenga, as usual, skipped out of the way with surprising agility, dodged in and out among the huts, and was presently seen balancing himself uneasily on the slippery thatch of one of them, where, I regret to say, he showed his contempt for Bwana Saidi after the manner of the Little Vulgar Boy in the 'Ingoldsby Legends.' Saidi made a furious rush, and lunged at him with his long stick; but Chapenga, nimble as a kid, was away up the slope of the roof before he could get near enough, and Saidi, overreaching his footing, slipped and fell forward full length on the ground.

Chapenga derided him.

'Bwana Saidi has been drinking *pombe*!' he cried. 'Oh! Bwana Omar, is not this the

month of fasting? Yet my master has drunk *pombe*, much *pombe*, and, behold, it catches him in the legs, and he has fallen!

Saidi rose slowly, and stood impotently shaking his stick at the offender, who by this time had reached the point of the conical roof (finished off with an old earthen pot, inverted over the bunch in which the ends of the grass were tied together), and sat on it in a contemptuous attitude, pretending to take snuff as he had seen his elders do.

'This is a bad place,' he announced, as the result of his reflections. 'There is hunger here, and much beating. I think I will run away to the white men at Karonga's. Their boys are fed every day on *ugali*, and rice, and beans—as much as they can eat—and every week a goat is killed for them.'

Whence Chapenga derived this information must be a matter of conjecture; it is possible that its only source was his inner consciousness. The unlucky boys down below felt their mouths water at the thought of an Eldorado where everyone had enough to eat. Saidi danced about, howling.

'Come down, thou Sheitan! Come down, and I will break all thy bones and throw them out to the hyenas!'

'Catch me first, Bwana! Wait till the *pombe* is gone out of thee, and then come up here and catch me, O chief!'

And the little wretch rocked himself to and fro with laughter, while Saidi danced round, rolling his eyes and foaming at the mouth, and calling heaven and earth to witness what an abandoned little fiend was this. He would probably have raged himself into an apoplectic fit if Omar's quiet voice had not interposed.

'The sun goes down, Bwana. It is the hour of prayer.'

'Ohé, Bwana Saidi! Go and pray! Go and pray, and beseech Allah to deliver me into thy hands!'

The luckless Saidi did not find it altogether easy to effect this sudden diversion of his feelings; but he spread his mat, and performed his devotions with a tolerable show of decency. As soon as his back was turned, Chapenga slipped down from the roof, and took up his position to leeward, so to speak, of Sheikh

Omar, where he went through his prostrations in a most edifying manner. He had not watched the Arabs at their prayers day after day for nothing. Rising to his feet, with *Al hamdu lillah* still on his lips, Saidi looked round him with a perplexed and angry stare. There was no Chapenga on the roof of the round hut, or anywhere else, so far as he could see, till, suddenly bringing his gaze back to his own immediate neighbourhood, he spied him squatted on the edge of Sheikh Omar's prayer-carpet.

With a kind of inarticulate bellow, he rushed at him—Chapenga, out of the fulness of his varied and peculiar experience, says he was exactly like a fat rhinoceros charging—but found himself stopped by Omar's outstretched arm. The old man had risen, and stood there, tall and stately, while Chapenga clung to his legs, trying to hide himself in the ample folds of his draperies.

'Let him be, Saidi ; he is but a child. And see,' he continued, without a trace of sarcasm in his even, courteous tones, 'the sun is down, and it is time to eat. And thou, *mtoto*, go and

make thy master's coffee, and see thou do it well. It is not good that boys should be impudent.'

Chapenga disappeared like a flash, almost subdued, and, with this unusual frame of mind strong upon him, bestowed an unwonted degree of attention on the preparation of the coffee, which was consequently excellent. It restored Saidi to such good humour as lay within his capacity, and Chapenga had no more to fear that night.

But Bwana Saidi had a good memory, as Chapenga well knew, and therefore walked softly for one whole day, and the best part of a second. Sheikh Omar knew it also, and kept an unobtrusively watchful eye on Saidi.



II

NEEDLESS to say, the lesson, such as it was, had no permanent effect. Chapenga saw he had a protector in Sheikh Omar, and he did not as yet know that Omar was about to leave for Ujiji very shortly, so that his behaviour did not tend to edification. Nay, he openly talked about the white men at Karonga's, casually remarking that he was tired of his present service, and would like to try theirs for a change.

'The white men pray to Satan,' said Saidi viciously.

It did not occur to him that this might be a recommendation in Chapenga's eyes, considering the relationship of which Saidi was continually reminding him.

'And they eat boys.'

Chapenga stretched out one skinny wrist, and regarded it attentively.

'I think,' he said quietly, 'they will not want to eat me just yet.'

His face assumed a gently pensive expression ; perhaps he was meditating on the long course of liberal feeding required to make him at all attractive from that point of view. But before he had put any of these reflections into words, he caught sight of one of his playmates making signals to him from behind a neighbouring fowl-house. It looked as though something interesting were on hand, and Chapenga carelessly sauntered off in the direction of the summons.

'Come ! Bwana Heri wants thee,' whispered the boy.

' Bwana Heri was a recent arrival from the coast, and a friend of Hamadi bin Salim, another member of the caravan. Hamadi was fat and dark, like Saidi ; but there the resemblance ceased, for he had a jolly, round, laughing face, and was a good-natured soul enough, take him all round.

'What for ?' whispered Chapenga back.

'Hush ! Come away before Saidi sees you.'

And they glided away like little serpents, in

and out among the huts and grain-stores, till they came to a square mud house with a veranda, where Bwana Heri and Hamadi were sitting on mats, with a couple of tumblers suspiciously close to them. Neither of them had been keeping Ramadan very strictly, and Bwana Heri had brought with him from the coast certain bottles, with which, as an orthodox Muslim, he had no business at any time.

'This is the boy, Bwana Heri,' said Hamadi. 'Come now, Chapenga, and dance for us, and thou shalt have a piece of sugar-cane. Show us how the Angoni warriors dance.'

Chapenga looked round for a stick to represent a spear, and picked up a flat piece of wood which did duty instead of a shield, and then threw himself into various martial attitudes, and emitted a series of whoops and whistles, winding up with the stabbing of an imaginary Bwana Saidi.

'Now the dance of the elephant-hunters.'

Chapenga went through another pantomime with immense applause.

'Now show us how the Washenzi (pagan) women dance.'

Chapenga unhitched the dirty wisp of calico round his waist, shook it out to its full length, and draped it round him a few inches higher up, to intimate that he now represented a girl. The other boy clapped his hands rhythmically, and Chapenga jigged backwards and forwards, in time to the clapping, but without moving from the spot where he stood. This, for some mysterious reason, Hamadi and his friend found immensely amusing, and they laughed till the tears stood in their eyes. Chapenga was rewarded, not only with the promised sugar-cane, but with a handful of Arab sweets, which Bwana Heri extracted from a jar beside him. Being somewhat breathed by his exertions, he was allowed a few minutes' interval, during which he tasted of the new delicacy, and came to the conclusion that life held more than he had previously been aware of. Then Hamadi, nudging his friend, with a sly wink, said :

‘ Now, *mtoto wangu*, show the Bwana how thy master does when he is fasting.’

Now indeed the fun grew fast and furious. Saidi sitting grim and sulky, wishing the day



were at an end, Saidi at his prayers, Saidi making up for lost time after sunset, Saidi's differences of opinion with his wives and other dependents—all these were most faithfully and artistically rendered, and the audience rolled about on their mats, and choked and laughed and choked again. And at the height of their enjoyment, Saidi, like a big, soft-footed tom-cat, stole upon them, and stood listening for a few minutes, and then flew at Chapenga with a strangled grunt and his eyes threatening to start out of his head. If he had been a white man, he would have been purple in the face ; as it was, he looked rather blacker than usual. Chapenga dodged him successfully at first, but tripped over a log of wood lying on the ground, and fell ; and Saidi fell on the top of him, which would have crushed the breath out of any average boy. But nobody has ever quite found out what Chapenga was made of.

‘I will kill thee!’ howled Saidi, scrambling to his feet—‘I will kill thee, little Sheitan!’

He dragged the boy up with his big hands, and was shaking him as a dog shakes a rat. Good-natured Hamadi, who knew that Saidi

was capable of carrying out his threat, began to look troubled.

‘He was but playing, Bwana Saidi; and it was we who set him on.’

‘Playing! playing! I will have no more of it!’

Saidi threw the child to the ground with a jerk, planted a big foot on him, and fumbled, with shaking hands, for the dagger in his sash. Chapenga was very fairly frightened by this time, but not too much so to know that his best chance lay in yelling; and he yelled accordingly, in the hope that Sheikh Omar might hear him.

Sheikh Omar heard, fortunately, and came to see what was the matter; otherwise it is highly probable that this story and Chapenga would have ended together.

Saidi became meekness itself at the sound of the old man's voice—that is to say, a very sulky, hang-dog sort of meekness. He took his foot off Chapenga and put back his dagger, and muttered something about the woes which befall masters of such very ill-conditioned young dogs as this.

‘Since you have no use for him, Bwana Saidi, what is his price? For I start to-morrow, and I need a boy to attend me on the journey.’

Saidi replied with emphasis that Chapenga was worth considerably less than nothing ; but, nevertheless, as soon as he found that Sheikh Omar was serious, he drove as hard a bargain as his fear of offending a powerful patron would let him. They haggled for three hours, Chapenga squatting by in agonized suspense ; and at length, when he saw himself paid for in good silver dollars, and knew that he had in truth changed masters, he stood on his head half a dozen times in succession, and defied Saidi openly in the plainest of language.

‘Come hither, Chapenga !’ cried Sheikh Omar sternly ; and Chapenga, with a sudden sinking of the spirits, obediently followed his new master into the latter’s house.

Everything here was as neat as a new pin. Chapenga stared open-mouthed at the fine mats on the floor, the Persian rug, the painted wooden chest, the Damascus sword in its sheath hanging from one of the posts, the

Koran in an embroidered silken case—dozens of things he had never seen before—till his wandering attention was recalled by something in Sheikh Omar's voice which forced him to listen.

'I am not fond of beating boys,' said Omar ; 'but they must learn to obey, they will never be men else. Thou art like a wild ape of the bush, and none has taught thee ; but I see that thou canst learn, if thou hast a mind. And, first of all, there is to be no more mocking of Bwana Saidi. I have said it.'

'E-e, Bwana!' ejaculated the subdued Chapenga in a very small voice.

'I have said that I do not like beating boys,' Omar went on ; 'but there are some who will not learn without the stick. Do as I bid thee, and it shall never come near thee. And now go to the stream and wash thyself. I will have no dirty boys to wait on me. When thou art clean, thou shalt have a decent garment.'

This was the beginning of Chapenga's education.

Sheikh Omar left Mlozi's before sunrise next



morning, riding on his white Muscat donkey in the rear of the five carriers, who were loaded with his provisions and personal baggage, his old confidential servant Swali marching at the head of the party. At the donkey's heels trotted Chapenga, carrying Omar's prayer-mat, and some other properties rolled into a bundle, on his head—washed and oiled, and groomed and dressed in a clean cloth round his waist, and a snowy little shirt : altogether a respectable and almost unrecognisable Chapenga. He now carried his chin very much in the air, and his former companions—who wrangled over the scrapings of the pots at Mlozi's—had no reason to regret his departure : for Chapenga would no longer have condescended to speak to them, far less play with them.

Even the attractions of *msuo*, for which interesting game they had constructed a site (you can hardly call it a board ; all you want to do is to scoop four rows of shallow holes in the ground) in a sheltered spot behind Hamadi's cook-house, would not have prevailed over his new-born sense of dignity.

Yet the position was not exactly what

Chapenga had imagined. He was not a privileged pet, like Hamadi's tame monkey, to be fed with sugar-cane and everything that he liked best, and make people laugh by his antics. He was not by any means overworked, but the little he had to do was required of him with inexorable rigour. It began to dawn on his consciousness that there is such a thing as speaking the truth. When he told lies (which had hitherto seemed to him a mere matter of course), Sheikh Omar's dark eyes looked at him so sternly that Chapenga was affected in quite a novel way, and would have liked to creep into a snail-shell, had there been one handy. And once, when after three several warnings Chapenga was caught eating preserved dates which did not belong to him—which he had, in fact, abstracted from Sheikh Omar's stores—Omar produced a plaited thong (such as, according to Bishop Steere's 'Swahili Handbook,' is used by 'overlookers and school-masters'), and Chapenga found out—previous experience to the contrary notwithstanding—that howling with all his might before he was hurt produced not the slightest result.



But Omar's educational system extended beyond the *kambaa*. A day or two after this last episode they were encamped for the night on the Urori road. Omar had finished his evening meal—Ramadan was now over—and had washed his hands, Chapenga holding the basin and pouring the water as if he had done nothing else all his days. Now, seated on his mat and smoking his long water-pipe, which made queer, uncanny gurgles from time to time, he called Chapenga to him.

'It is good that thou shouldst learn something, child. Thou art not a pig or a monkey, who grow up, live, and die, knowing nothing of Allah who made them. Now listen well, and say after me the words of the Prophet—blessed be his name!'

And Omar began slowly: 'La Illah il Allah.'

Chapenga repeated his lesson so assiduously that the good old man rewarded him with a pat on the head and a sugared almond, and said:

'This is well. We will learn some more to-morrow.'

In a short time Chapenga could rattle off the Fath'ha in true orthodox sing-song, like any

Muslim born. Of course, he had as much notion of its meaning as he had of the Athanasian Creed ; and Omar offered no explanations, thinking, perhaps, that the understanding would come later—perhaps, also, that it was not necessary.

Sheikh Omar intended to go to Kabunda's, at the south end of Tanganyika, transact some business with the Arabs he expected to meet there, and then take passage for Ujiji in Sali bin Abed's dhow. Now, it was properly the dry season ; but there are exceptions to all things, and it sometimes rains in July on the Tanganyika plateau. They had marched through a week of fine weather, with burning noons and clear cold nights, when, behold ! the clouds came up—it thundered and lightened, and the rain came down in sheets—and so it continued to do on and off for several days running. There was a cold wind, moreover, sweeping over the eastern hills, fit to cut you in two.

The carriers, tired and dispirited with struggling through the wet grass, and chilled to the bone when the day's march was over, were only too ready to listen to the dismal reports of

people they met on the road—rumours of war ahead, and of sore sickness at Kabunda's (as was likely enough ; it was a dirty hole, like most slavers' camps), and among previous caravans on the road. Swali was at his wits' end to keep up their spirits, lest they should run away in a body, and got his master to write out verses of the Koran on little bits of paper, which he distributed to them, to hang round their necks as disinfectant amulets.

The day after this sanitary precaution had been taken they got a worse fright. It was about four in the afternoon, and they were approaching a recognised camping-place of the caravans (Omar usually avoided these for good and sufficient reasons), when they became aware of a strong smell, which convinced them that there must be a dead animal about. Now, a chronically half-starved native, who, when he happens to get hold of a piece of meat, doesn't mind how high it is, can stand a good deal in the way of smells ; but this one speedily became too much, even for Chapenga, whose powers in that line were something phenomenal. When they reached the grass shelters, still standing

round the embers of the dead camp-fires, all was explained. The sickness had indeed been there, and the survivors had been too terrified to stop and bury their companions.

There was nothing for it but to push on at once, and unluckily the rain, which had been holding up for some time, returned with renewed force. It was two or three hours before they could find a good place to camp in, and everyone turned in worn out, wet and wretched.

Next morning old Omar rose, feeling very shaky. He could eat nothing, though Swali used his utmost skill to tempt him, and brought his breakfast himself, instead of sending Chapenga with it, in the hope of coaxing him to eat. Omar smiled sadly, and shook his head. 'Bring me the blue bottle that the Englishman gave me at Zanzibar,' he said; and Swali got out the medicine, and, sending Chapenga for a cup of water, measured out the dose and administered it. Omar felt better after awhile, and insisted on starting, so Swali helped him on his donkey and walked beside him, feeling sadly distressed. He had grown up in Omar's service, and really loved him.



Chapenga was vaguely uncomfortable: he was not accustomed to concern himself much about others, or, in any case, to give an account of his feelings, and, had he been pressed, could not have got beyond saying he did not like the position of affairs. So much, at any rate, was clear; but another view of the matter suddenly occurred to him. For, as Swali was walking beside his master, there was no one at the head of the *ulendo*, and this brilliant idea put new life into him. He hurried on—Swali had other things to think of than to notice what he was doing—slipped past the five carriers, one after another, and took the foremost place, whence he so reviled and derided these unhappy men that it is a wonder they did not then and there fall on him and cuff him soundly.

‘Where is Chapenga?’ asked Omar, suddenly noticing his absence. ‘See where he is, Swali; I fear the child will be lost.’

‘No fear of that, Bwana,’ said Swali grimly. He would not have thought the loss an irremediable misfortune. ‘I think he has only gone on with the *tenga-tenga* men. Hark! there he is, Bwana.’

A small shrill voice was heard issuing orders in such commanding tones, and denouncing with such vigour of virtuous indignation the 'lazy slaves' who ate the Bwana's *ngali* to no purpose, that Omar smiled, and merely told Swali to tell the carriers to keep Chapenga in sight.

It did not rain that day, and they were fortunate in getting a fairly good camping-place before the sun had sunk very low. Chapenga had so hustled and driven the porters that, instead of sitting down on the ground in tired apathy, they had two good fires burning and water fetched by the time Omar and Swali came up; for the old man could only go slowly, and often had to rest. He dismounted, leaning heavily on his man's shoulder, and Swali supported him to the mat which Chapenga had laid ready. He sank down on it, his face bluish-white. Swali, with shaking hands, began to pour out the medicine. Omar sat up and tried to drink, but he could not swallow. A kind of convulsion shook him, and he fell back.

'Ah! . . . it is written. . . .' He stretched him-



self out, folded his hands on his breast. '*Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures, the Most Merciful, the King of the Day of Judgment—*'

His voice stopped, he gasped for breath once or twice, and then lay still. Swali bent over him, and closed his eyes.

Chapenga, standing by, saw it all—saw Swali throw himself down beside the dead man's feet, and heard him sobbing and crying out, 'O Bwana! O my master! my father and mother!'—and, frightened and uneasy, was glad to run away, and crouch on the ground beside the despised *tenga-tenga* men, with his back in the direction of *that*, which only a little while ago had been kind Sheikh Omar.

III

THEY were still some distance from Kabunda's, not less than three days' journey, as Swali reckoned, in the present state of the country, for the road was even worse ahead. He sent off one of the carriers to the nearest village to borrow a couple of hoes, and then set about what was necessary, ordering Chapenga to help him, which Chapenga did with shuddering reluctance. It was not the first time, by any means, that he had seen death; but it had never, so to say, come home to him before. He was afraid of the rigid figure and white face, like a wax mask; and, moreover, he was filled with a vague dread on his own account. He knew very well that he had lost a protector, and knew also that he was not a favourite with Swali.

True, Swali was not Saidi, and had never

been really unkind to him ; but—— And in the meantime there was this dreadful, still presence, and Swali ordering him about with grim brevity. He did not like it. Swali washed the body, and dressed it in a clean shirt and drawers, and laid aside the little personal belongings—the seal-ring and the jewelled dagger that Omar had worn in his sash and the rest—to be handed over to Omar's kinsman, Ali bin Majid at Ujiji. When all was finished, he put the things into a box, and sealed it with Omar's seal, which he kept on his finger in the meantime. Chapenga followed the property with longing eyes—especially the dagger, which had a beautiful ivory handle, set with emeralds and rubies. If he could have laid hands on it, I fear no scruples would have restrained him ; but Swali took care not to give him the chance.

The carriers came back from the village with very long faces. There was war, they said ; Mirambo's Ruga-Ruga were out, and 'the road was dead.' Nothing on earth would induce them to go on to Kabunda's. They were persuaded, by the promise of an extra fathom

apiece, to dig Sheikh Omar's grave under a wild fig-tree, and Swali laid him there, and they covered him up, and piled a heap of stones to mark the place and keep off the hyenas. And then, since no other might be, Swali mounted his master's donkey, the carriers took up their loads, and the party started back again to Mlozi's.

Chapenga did not enjoy the journey. Saidi was still at Mlozi's, for all he knew to the contrary, and if Saidi claimed him again it was not likely that anyone would interfere. On the whole, it would be more satisfactory if he could make his escape before they got back, but it needed thinking over. It was no easy matter for a small boy to make his way alone across country. So far from it that it never occurred to Swali to take any particular precaution against Chapenga's running away.

As a matter of fact, Swali would not have handed him over to Saidi unless he had been compelled. He was an honest fellow, according to his lights, and painfully anxious to account for every item of his late master's property. He knew that Omar had paid cash

for Chapenga—he had registered the exact amount in a very tenacious memory—Chapenga must therefore be delivered, along with the rest of the property and the seal-ring, which lived provisionally on Swali's finger, to Ali bin Majid, Omar's brother's son, at Ujiji. There was no love lost between the two, but Swali would never have gone out of his way to be unkind to the boy ; in fact, for his dead master's sake, who had been so unaccountably good to this objectionable little Mshenzi, he made, for him, considerable efforts in the opposite direction. If Chapenga had found it possible to look upon Swali as a friend, the whole course of this story would have been different ; as it was, he nursed his grudges and kept his eyes open.

He waited some days, thinking it well to avail himself of Swali's escort as long as possible, and then, taking advantage of one of the many windings of path, slipped a little way into the tall grass, and squatted down as snugly as a rabbit in a burrow, without moving, or even breathing. Presently he heard the pad of the donkey's hoofs, and the swishing of the grass as he forced it down on either side. Swali could not

see who was ahead, and the carriers could not keep in sight of one another; so, as he had foreseen, nobody missed him.

Chapenga was carrying Swali's rolled-up sleeping-mat and blanket, and a small bundle entrusted to him by one of the *tenga-tenga* men, containing the latter's provision of maize flour and sweet potatoes for the journey. The mat made rather an awkward bundle, but the grass was quite tall enough to hide it when set up on end; the stout, entangled stems would not let it fall. The owner of the bundle had also handed Chapenga his spear to carry, so that he was armed as well as provisioned.

He waited till he thought Swali must have put a safe interval between them, and then returned to the path, leaving the mat behind him in the grass, not from any scruple of honesty, but because it was troublesome to carry, and he did not reflect that he would be glad of it at night. He followed the path for a while, then he thought he heard distant shouts; so he hid again till all was quiet, and then went on. By-and-by he got out of the tall grass into an open piece of bush, where he

could see about him. Here a stream crossed the path, and he stopped to drink, and, feeling hungry, took one of the sweet potatoes out of his bundle, and ate it as he went along.

On and on he went, and began to feel tired. The sun was getting low in the sky, and it struck him that night was coming on, and that it was very lonely. A bird flew across the path now and then, and he could hear the cooing of a wood-pigeon a long way off. Otherwise there was scarcely a living thing to be seen or heard ; and between the uncanny stillness and the possibilities of lions, leopards, bogies, and such-like, which kept occurring to his mind, Chapenga felt decidedly uncomfortable, and began to sing in order to keep up his spirits. As his singing was of a peculiar character—reminding the uninitiated European more of the drone of the bagpipes than of anything else—it is possible that it may have frightened away any ghosts that happened to be about ; for Chapenga saw none.

And now the sun was setting, and it would soon be dark. . . . Chapenga did not like the dark, and facing it alone was more than he had

ever done in his life before. . . . Certainly there are good and sufficient reasons for not liking to be left alone in the African bush at night ; but Chapenga, though quite alive to the peril of lions and leopards, was not thinking chiefly of these. Wizards were loose. They flew along on great wings over the tree-tops ; they travelled along the roads, huge in stature, but able to make themselves quite small when they wished, carrying lights, which they put out when the unlucky wayfarer approached them, and if they caught you, then it was all up with you. The elder boys at Mlozi's had been wont to relate horrible histories at night, just when their juniors were going to sleep.

One told how a *mfiti* had come one night into the hut when he and his companions were sleeping, and had stood beside him, very big and awful. The other boys had hidden their heads under their blankets ; but he (the narrator) had 'strengthened his heart,' and addressed the intruder boldly, telling him that he knew who he was, and would catch him when day came and make him drink *mwavi*. Whereon the apparition vanished. But if he had not



been thus firmly dealt with . . . Chibwana implied that something very terrible would have happened, but left the details to his audience's imagination.

All this came back to Chapenga now, and though he saw no lights coming along the path, and heard no ghostly wings flapping in the air, he would have been heartily glad of the society of Swali and the carriers. It really was getting dark. . . . The Bush lay indistinct in gray shadows . . . and as he realized that he really was alone and out of reach of all help, his terror grew beyond control, and he yelled as he had never done before, not even when he thought Bwana Saidi was going to kill him.

'Swali! Swali! *Swali!* Chimbano! Msuli! I am lost; I am dead! Kawere! Chimbano! Come back! Here! Help! Come! I am killed—I, Chapenga!'

He had quite lost his head, and rushed about wildly till he was tired, and then—whether he had come quite to the end of his capacity for being scared, or what else had taken place, I cannot tell; but he stood still and looked round him. There was a brightish moon in her first

quarter, giving just light enough to see, a little way off, a huge baobab-tree with a hollow trunk. He made for the tree, and, after taking the precaution of raking round the cavity as far as he could reach with his spear, crept in, curled himself up, and fell asleep.

As a matter of fact, he slept long and soundly, hearing neither the roaring of a distant lion nor the nearer howling of sundry hyenas. But it seemed to him that he had only just closed his eyes, when Sheikh Omar stepped forward out of the darkness, staff in hand, majestic and terrible, and looked on him with such frowning brows that Chapenga had not a word to say for himself, but would have liked to sink into the earth. And then the old man raised his staff, and Chapenga tried to run away ; but his feet were like lead, and he could not raise them from the ground, and in the struggle he awoke, and found that it was just getting light.

He was very cold and stiff, and wished for a skin of any sort to wrap himself in, or some boys to creep close to ; but he also remembered that there was no one to make him get up, and

that he could sleep till the sun was high if he liked. So he rubbed his aching legs with his hands, and turned himself over to warm the side which had been exposed, and blissfully dropped off to sleep again.

When he awoke again, the sun was shining brightly and all the birds astir. He was very hungry, and fell to work on the sweet potatoes with such goodwill that he soon finished them all. Then he picked up his spear and started once more. It says something for his foresight that he still carried the bundle of *ufa* with him, instead of abandoning it as too much bother ; but, then, he had learnt by hard experience the value of food.

Things looked very different to-day in the bright sunshine. He had not been eaten during the night ; therefore, by a peculiar but pleasant method of reasoning, it seemed exceedingly improbable that he would be eaten at all, and he no longer wished to rejoin Swali and his men. He marched on with great vigour, and sat down to rest by a stream in the middle of the day, where he drank and cooled himself in the water, and would have liked to eat, only that porridge

without fire or a pot to cook it in is not practicable, and raw *ufa* is at best one degree less edible than raw flour.

So he left the bundle behind, and, a little farther on came to a *msuku* tree laden with ripe fruit. He climbed into the branches, picked as many as he could reach, and knocked down more with his spear, and feasted on the yellow, juicy, honey-sweet *masuku*, not till he had had enough, but till there was no more to be got at.

That afternoon he met some people—three or four Wankonde men, with their wives and children, who were trying to escape from Mlozi's raids to a less disturbed part of the country. They were gentle, kindly people, and full of pity for Chapenga when he told them unblushingly that he had strayed from his party and was trying to catch them up. They had seen, if not met, Swali (for, in fact, they had remained hidden in the Bush till he had passed by), and thought Chapenga might come up with the party by sunset, as they were going to camp by the Songwe, the last camp before reaching Mlozi's.



But Chapenga took a rapid review of matters in his own mind, and decided that here was a resource. He rather looked down on the Wankonde as a general thing, because they were raided by the Arabs, with whom, in his easy adaptability, he proudly identified himself; but he was safer with them than alone in the Bush, and they were going away from Mlozi's, which he would have done before if he had had anywhere to go or anyone to go with. And, in any case, twenty-four hours of his own company was quite as much as Chapenga cared for. So he confided to the Wankonde that he was afraid; that he had already been scared to death, and would be too tired to reach the Songwe before dark; and, moreover, his master—and here he gave a most blood-curdling character-sketch of Bwana Saidi, who came in useful for once in his life—was a fiend, who would surely beat him to death if he showed up, and his one desire was to run away from the tyrant.

And the Wankonde, who knew what the slavers were, poor creatures! believed him, and willingly took him with them; and one of the men, finding that he was still hungry, gave him

a piece of raw *chinangwa* to chew, which was at any rate substantial, and lasted for some time. I am glad to be able to add that Chapenga's discarded *ufa* was still lying by the stream where he had rested, and the foremost Konde pounced on it as a veritable treasure-trove, and they made porridge of it that night, when they camped in a hollow some distance off the track. The leader took two bits of wood out of his goatskin bag, and drilled away till the sparks flew into the dry grass another had placed ready ; and so the camp-fire was lit, and one of the women, who had filled her cooking-pot as they passed the stream, set it on to boil. Every one had enough to eat, and Chapenga, curled up among the children, fell asleep beside the fire, feeling as safe and cosy as he had ever done in his life.

IV

CHAPENGA lived a wandering life with these Wankonde for the next few weeks, during which there is nothing particular to record. They were kind to him, and he (to put it mildly) did little or nothing to deserve kindness at their hands.

Swali, after making some search for Chapenga—in fact, he despatched two of his men back along the road, but they somehow missed him—came to the conclusion that he was lost—and had probably, in just retribution for his many transgressions, been eaten by a lion. He duly notified the fact to Omar's nephew, Ali, when he handed over the seal-ring, the donkey, and the other things. Hamadi had gone with him to Ujiji, but Saidi was still at the camp, intending to leave with the big *ulendo* which was to start for Kilwa a week before the next

full moon. Saidi had done pretty well, both in slaves and ivory, and his *boma* was full of the former kind of merchandise, but he still wanted a few more porters to carry the latter.

At this juncture one of the Wahenga hangers-on at the camp came in with a report of a little band of able-bodied Wankonde hidden away in a secluded part of the Bush, living by hunting and otherwise as best they could, on wild fruits and roots. The Henga had picked up sufficient information to act as guide to the spot; a raid was at once organized, and Saidi started at the head of twenty-five men, all armed with guns.

Now, just at this time Beckford had been some three or four months at Karonga's. It was his second year in the country. Having served his apprenticeship, and proved his capacity for making himself useful at Mandala, he had been transferred for a season to Matope, and thence, when young Matthews had to be sent down the lake for a change, to the North End station, where Torrance was then in charge. There were, besides, of white men at Karonga's, young Maclachlan, also an employé of the



Company's ; Duvernier, of undetermined nationality—he was said to keep several on hand, and avow each in turn, as occasion served ; hunting and exploring on his own account—and the Reverend Cyril Worthington, who had come to the North End for a holiday, because he was run down and needed a change, and who was now waiting for the steamer to take him back to his mission-station.

Now, it befell about the middle of August that business was somewhat at a standstill, because Mlozi and Ramathan had sent in great store of ivory, and the goods wherewith Torrance was to pay for them had not yet arrived, being on board the expected steamer which was to take Mr. Worthington down on her return journey. Moreover, it was glorious clear weather, with crisp, cool nights, and there were rumours of buck and buffalo in abundance, and Beckford was seized with a great desire to *saka-nyama*, or, in other words, to go shooting.

Torrance was quite willing to give him a few days' leave ; but he said he couldn't spare Maclachlan. The steamer might come in any

day, and he must have one European to help ; for though Jacob the Capitão was all very well, and almost as good as a white man—in fact, better than *some*, said Torrance with grim emphasis and a vicious twist of his moustache—he couldn't do everything. Privately, I think he was not sorry for the chance of sitting somewhat heavily upon Maclachlan, who had a way—and a very taking way it was, too, till you knew him better—of getting the heavier and more disagreeable part of his work done by other men, notably Beckford. Torrance—who came from Aberdeen, by - the - by—saw and heard, and never let on ; but now that his chance had come, he meant to take it, and keep Maclachlan's nose, so to speak, at the grindstone, in a way that unlucky youth would not soon forget.

So Beckford asked Worthington to come instead, and Worthington, who could no more shoot than he could fly, and was short-sighted into the bargain, was made happy by being entrusted with the gun least calculated, in Torrance's and Beckford's opinion, to harm himself and others ; and they started, pre-



ceded by six carriers with a tent and provisions, and attended by their respective boys and Gyp. Gyp is not mentioned last as being least important, but only because this arrangement gives a better balance to the sentence. She was a white fox-terrier (white in both senses of the word, for she had come out from home with Beckford) with one black ear, and she loved Beckford and Torrance, patronized Worthington, distrusted, with a slight flavour of disapproval, Maclachlan, and utterly despised all natives, with the doubtful exceptions of Jacob and the boy who fed and worshipped her, and more especially all native dogs. It was this side of her character which gave Beckford most trouble ; he had had many times to make apologies, and even pay compensation, on her account, and once, when a big Konde chief had fled in terror from the station (in the middle of a very important *mlandu*), with Gyp in full cry at his heels, and been with difficulty coaxed back by means of a solatium for his torn calico and wounded dignity, Torrance had declared in his wrath that something would happen to that brute if Beckford didn't keep

it in better order. Which warning Beckford took to heart, and, let us hope, Gyp also.

They had fairly good sport—that is to say, Beckford shot a buffalo, two bush-buck, and some birds, and Worthington fired several shots without hitting Gyp or any of the boys—and were thinking of returning, when Beckford's boy discovered elephant-spoor on the bank of a stream where they stopped to rest. The chance of coming up with those elephants was very remote—I may as well say at once that none of the party even caught sight of so much as the tail-tip of a single one—but Beckford could not turn back without, at least, making the attempt; so they followed in the track of the herd, and thereby unexpectedly came upon game of a very different sort.

For about mid-day they stumbled on a little camp of armed men at a distance from all the ordinary tracks, who were, in fact, no other than Saidi and his followers. They had not lit a fire like honest travellers: they were silent and furtive, and evidently disliked being questioned, and conveyed to Beckford's mind a strong impression that they could be after no

good. But (as might have been expected) nothing was to be got out of them, and Beckford did not exactly see what he could do, so he and his companions pursued their way along the elephant-track. As soon, however, as they were out of hearing, his boy, Chinene, came close up to him, looking very important, and whispered :

‘Mzungu, do you know that man in the white shirt? It is Bwana Saidi.’

‘Oh, is it?’ said Beckford. ‘I’m not surprised to hear it. Never had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman before, but I’ve heard enough about him. What do you think he’s doing here, Chinene?’

Chinene imparted in a cautious undertone his conviction that there were Wankonde hidden away somewhere in the Bush, and that Saidi intended to capture and take them away to the coast.

‘What do you say, Worthington?’ said Beckford after translating, for Worthington could not quite follow what the boy said.

‘We must find those people and warn them.’

'And supposing it means a collision with Mr. Saidi?'

Worthington looked round and counted the guns, as if he had not known already how many there were. Then he said :

'It would get you into trouble with——'

'Torrance? Oh, I guess I can square him, if that were all. . . . But it's scarcely the thing to propose to you——'

'Why not? You're forgetting Bishop Mackenzie at Mbame. But . . . I suppose it belongs to my office to look at both sides of a question, and point out difficulties for the consideration of you hot-headed men of action. . . . What if we should set a war going, and have the whole country eaten up and the people deprived of the little protection your company's station can give them, which is always something? And if, as I think you told me, the Arabs are only staying here, *now*, because there are accounts due to them for ivory——'

'Yes, I know ; it's an awkward thing, that. I hope to goodness the steamer is up by now, and has brought the right goods and enough of them. Every time I've heard of the Wankonde



being raided lately, I've felt as if we were responsible ; and Torrance feels it, I know, though he doesn't say anything. But what can one do ?

'I can't suggest anything,' said Worthington dejectedly, 'except that we must be doubly careful. . . . Still, one must take risks of some sort, however one looks at the thing. But how are we to find these people ?'

There was a hurried consultation between Beckford, the boys, and the carriers, with the result that one of the latter, a Konde, said he thought he knew where some of his people were hiding, and could guide the Azungu there. But it would appear either that Bwana Saidi had a different set of them in view or that he knew a more direct way to the place, for after an hour or two's hard marching they heard shots and the screaming of women, and ran forward as hard as they could, the boys hard at their heels, and the *tenga-tenga* men, I am glad to say, not more than a reasonable distance behind.

They arrived in time for a sight which was not altogether new to Beckford, and which

Worthington had often read of, but never seen : two men dead ; a third badly wounded, leaning on his hand, like the Dying Gladiator ; two Arabs struggling to overpower a fourth, and some more busy tying the women, and trying, not very successfully, to cuff and kick them into silence ; and in the foreground of the picture Saidi himself, in full career, after a small boy, who was running before him like a frightened rabbit. He caught sight of Beckford, and made for him, Saidi labouring after, while the struggling men raised a shout of '*A-zungu-u-u !*' and the slavers, taken aback, stopped short for a minute. Beckford caught up the small boy in his hands and swung him behind him, and then drew himself up, stiff as a poker and serious as a tombstone, to meet the panting and crestfallen Saidi, who came up with a sullenly submissive '*Yambo, Bwana.*'

'What are these people?' asked Beckford with the curtest acknowledgment of the salutation.

'They are my runaway slaves, Bwana ; they fled from Mlozi's camp three days ago, taking much property with them.'



'That is a lie, Bwana Saidi ; I know that man on the ground. He is a free Konde from Kasingula's. Speak ! is not your name Mtete?'

'The Mzungu speaks truth,' said the dying man, gathering all his strength for the effort. 'These lying dead are my brothers, and the other is my sister's son ; and these are our wives whom they were binding. We fled from our village because these Anasala are eating up the country.'

He stopped, choked, gurgled, and fell back. His wife, whose hands were not yet tied, broke from her captors and threw herself over him. Worthington stepped forward to see if nothing could be done.

'And this boy ?' queried Beckford.

'Truly, Bwana, he indeed is my slave ; he has an evil heart, and he ran away from me in the end of the moon of Ramadan. Ask Bwana Mlozi, my lord, or any of those at the *boma* ; they have seen him there with me.'

'You lie, Bwana Saidi !' said a shrill little voice from behind Beckford. Chapenga was holding on tightly to the belt of Beckford's

khaki suit, and peeping cautiously round his leg. 'Mlozi knows that you are not my master, and that you sold me to Omar the Muscati.'

'Thou accursed little monkey! I will break thy neck for thee! My lord, he lies, he cannot help lying—it is the nature of these Washenzi.'

'Mzungu! mzungu! do not send me back to him! He will kill me!' wailed Chapenga.

Beckford could not hear himself speak amid the babel.

'Silence!' he cried. 'Bwana Saidi, the boy is not worth much to you; let him come with us. And as for these people, our nation will not have slavery, and they must be set free. And if you do not at once bid your people let them go, I will shoot you.' And Beckford turned to take his gun from Chinene. He doesn't know to this day what he would have done had Saidi refused to be impressed.

But Saidi's private opinion was that all Englishmen were Sheitans, worse Sheitans than Chapenga, as possessing infinite powers of doing mischief. And Chinene had the wit to rise to the occasion, for he remarked casually, while handing over the gun:

‘Mzungu, shall I go back and call the other gentlemen? I fear they will lose their way in the Bush and miss us.’

Then, raising his voice, he desired one of the carriers, a stentorian fellow, to shout to ‘the other white men’s’ boys. Stentor, fortunately, did as he was bid without remark, and the slavers wavered and looked uncomfortable. Profiting by a moment of indecision on his captors’ part, the yet uninjured Konde tore himself from their hands, and ran in among Beckford’s carriers, who received him with open arms. Worthington rose up from his examination of the dead man, and shook his head sadly.

‘Well, are you going to let these women go? This is my gun—one, two, three.’ He looked at the group round the women: they scattered ignominiously. ‘Now go,’ said Beckford, ‘and I will not shoot this time. But I do not know what our friends will say; for, by the law of England, he who kills a man must die, and I see three dead men. Therefore you had better take yourselves off before they come.’

Somewhat to his astonishment, Saidi took

his advice, and the slavers retreated, grumbling and dispirited. Chapenga, in the joy of his heart, crowed like a cock, and was beginning to persecute Saidi's retreat with remarks more true than edifying, when Beckford shook him and bade him hold his tongue. Worthington stared at his friend, amazed and half reproachful.

'Well, it was a game of bluff,' said Beckford, 'and I've won it. I really had no more notion beforehand what I was going to do than the boy here. But I suppose you'll say it was very immoral?'

'I? My dear fellow, I don't know what to say about it. I'll reserve my judgment till I know what else you could have done. I—I don't think I should have done it myself. But then'—a humorous twinkle slid into the corner of his eye—'I should never have had the wit to think of it.'

'Come, any way, we must get the people out of this. I suppose they'll want to bury those poor fellows. The women are sure to have hoes with them; at least, I see one inside that *masasa*. I'll get our men to help them,

and you and I and the two boys must do sentry-go. Look here, youngster, there's nothing to be afraid of now, so you needn't hang on to my coat-tails. What do you speak—Swahili? Then, I'll turn him over to you, Worthington.'

V

WHEN Beckford marched back with the rescued Wankonde, Torrance's eyebrows went right up into his hair, and when he had heard the story his face lengthened. But the steamer had come at last, and he was very busy, so he allowed the people to stay—there being already some of their tribe about the station—only remarking that, if trouble came of this, he should know whom to thank for it.

However, Mlozi never alluded to the matter, and though Saidi came in once or twice before the *ulendo* left, it was only in the hope of getting some compensation in cloth for the loss of Chapenga's services. He might have got it in the end; for neither Torrance nor Beckford knew for certain whether he had not some sort of legal claim to the boy, and Beckford, after all he had seen and heard, would have conceded

the point rather than hand over Chapenga to his tender mercies. But Kapandansaru came across the lake to see Torrance on business, and Kapandansaru had been a friend of Omar's, and Torrance knew that he could depend on his word. And when he saw Saidi sitting on the compound waiting for an audience, and heard the reason, he told Torrance that Saidi was a low swindler, and had to his certain knowledge parted with Chapenga to Sheikh Omar—'upon whom be peace!'—in consideration of certain moneys. Properly he belonged to Omar's heirs, but the Arab did not think they were likely to make much fuss about reclaiming him.

'If a rat runs away from my *tembe* to another,' said Kapandansaru, 'I do not send and fetch him back.'

So Saidi and his grievance were dismissed, and he vanishes from this story in the wake of Mlozi, who, all accounts being paid in full, started for the coast a few days later. The latter, as we know, returned to give trouble at a later date, but that is neither here nor there as far as Chapenga is concerned.

Chapenga had once more fallen on his feet. The Azungu were too busy, for the next few days, to take much notice of him, which was sad, but Chapenga had survived worse misfortunes. He made up for this one by lording it over the other boys about the place in a way perfectly inexplicable—unless through his innate force of character and genius for command—for most of them were older than he, and many a great deal bigger. He kept them all entranced with the narrative of his unparalleled sufferings and adventures (which, you may be sure, lost nothing in the telling), and the greatness, glory, and riches of his late master, Sheikh Omar, whose memory he exploited as shamelessly, for his own purposes, as any sensation journalist could have done. He had ridden on a white donkey, he averred, when in that gentleman's service, and he had worn a red velvet jacket embroidered with gold, and a red fez, and golden shoes, and a knife, the description whereof was based on his recollections of the dagger he would have liked to steal if Swali had given him the chance. Had he been able to imagine any other items of magnificence, they

would, without fail, have been added to the picture.

One would have expected him to be somewhat *blasé* after all these experiences ; but he took the keenest interest in all the belongings of the Azungu, minutely inspected the houses (they were rough enough, being only thatched 'grass and mud' constructions, but certainly a cut above those at Mlozi's *boma*), and the store, and the huts where the station-boys lived—in fact, everything, down to the accommodation for the goats and fowls. He was just completing one of these tours, when he strolled carelessly past the veranda where Beckford, Maclachlan, and Worthington were sitting after dinner and looking over the lake.

'There he is,' said Beckford, catching sight of the small, disreputable figure in its wisp of dirty calico. 'Come here—what's your name? Chinene, call that boy.'

Chapenga leisurely obeyed the summons, and squatted down against one of the veranda posts, surveying the company with a look suggestive of some very old and uncanny bird. Beckford sent Chinene for the sugar, and

directed him to bestow a spoonful on Chapenga, who received it in his hollowed palms, and said with humble fervour, 'Sank you.'

'Tell him he's got to wash himself and his calico if he wants to stay here, Chinene. The lake's close by, and we don't want dirty boys.'

Chapenga took no notice whatever of Chinene, but addressed himself directly to Beckford in a tone of mild and dignified reproach :

'There are crocodiles in the lake, Mzungu.'

'Nonsense!' said Beckford ; 'there is a fence put up to keep them out, and the boys bathe inside it. And when you are washed and have got your head shaved'—it was more or less like a thorny jungle, Chapenga having removed only such extraneous matters as hurt him when he lay down—'you shall have a new calico.'

Chapenga reflected that there was a certain monotony in virtuous masters, and the reflection saddened him for a moment ; but he recovered himself, and went on in an easy conversational tone :

'The Azungu are great men of war ; they have more and better guns than Bwana Mlozi.

They are good guns that shoot—*pe ! pe ! pe !*—many shots at once—big bullets that can kill an elephant. Bwana, you must take one of those guns and kill Saidi.'

'Oho, you're a bloodthirsty young beggar ! What did Saidi do to you, then ?'

For Beckford had hitherto been too busy to listen to the thrilling story which had edified the station boys. He got it now with a fulness of graphic detail enhanced by frequent practice ; and though inclined, on the whole, to suspect an element of romance in the narrative, he knew sufficient of Saidi and his kind to feel that the truth was probably quite bad enough.

'And you must kill him, Mzungu,' Chapenga wound up, 'for he has a very bad heart. It is good that he should be killed. And when he is dead, he will go down to Jehannum'—pointing with an emphatic gesture, as though that region were situated exactly under Beckford's chair—'and then he will be stuck on a spear and roasted in the fire, and Sheitan will eat him. He is very fat, Mzungu.'

Such an energy of hatred was expressed in the child's face that Worthington almost shrank

from the sight, yet kept gazing at him in a kind of fascination, and whispered to Beckford :

‘What did he say ? I didn’t quite catch.’

Beckford told him, and he shuddered—for he had sensitive nerves, and this had, in very truth, given him ‘a turn’—and said something, with a sigh about ‘fearful depravity.’

‘H’m!’ said Beckford ; and then, after a pause, ‘Were you ever bullied at school?’

Worthington looked rather surprised.

‘N-no, I can’t say I was. I never was at school much, you know—only a little while at a preparatory one—and then I had a private tutor.’

‘Ah!’ said Beckford. He was going to add, ‘I thought so,’ but checked himself, dimly conscious that this was one of the things one would rather not have said.

‘What I meant was . . . when I was at school, there was a fellow that made me feel sometimes—allowing for difference of circumstances and all that—pretty much as that poor little devil does towards Saidi. Of course, I knew it was very wrong, and I believe I made a sort of effort now and then not to hate him ; but it was no sort of use till he left. Then I

forgot all about him, and after a while I found I could bear the thought of him with equanimity. He couldn't have been an admirable character; but if I met him now, I don't think I should want to go for him with a knife.'

'And the application?' Worthington asked after a pause.

'Oh, well, I only meant I can guess what the little beggar feels like. It's all so fresh, you see; but when he's been here a bit, and gets a little flesh on his bones, and finds out what it is to be decently treated, Saidi will drop out of his mind altogether. He's not a fiend—they aren't as a rule—but they don't like being bullied any more than you or I do.'

'Like it or not, I guess it's good for them,' said Maclachlan, who had been half asleep, and was not, for some reason or other, in a very amiable temper. 'They're all alike; it's no use your standing up for them, Beck. You ought to have been a missionary, that's what *you* ought. I believe it was you spoilt that Jakini, so that he's never been any good.'

Worthington, thinking it best not to hear this sally—for which he was charitably inclined

to put the chief blame on the mosquitoes—turned his head aside, and presently remarked to Beckford, with eyes studiously fixed on the horizon :

‘It strikes me that some little pitchers have an extraordinary capacity for the English language. I wish I could learn theirs as quickly ; but it’s just as well to be careful.’

‘I expect you’re right. Just bring me the biscuit-tin, Chinene.’

Chinene did so, and Beckford selected three biscuits, adorned with devices in pink-and-white sugar.

‘Give these to Chapenga, Chinene. You may go now. Be a good boy, and remember what I told you.’

Chapenga took himself off with a respectful salaam, caricatured from the more ceremonious Arabs he had seen, and divided the biscuits among the boys gathered about the fires, roasting maize and telling stories, while they waited for the pot to boil for their evening porridge. For, in spite of his early training, Chapenga was no sooner removed from the fear of imminent starvation than he was quite willing to

go shares with others. Perhaps there was as much vainglory as good-nature in this ; he had so seldom been in a position to give that he thoroughly enjoyed the superiority it conferred. But, after all, if mixed motives be a crime, who is guiltless? Chapenga, at any rate, never learnt to analyze his, and it seems both unkind and uncalled for to do it for him on this occasion.

The three white men were left alone. Beckford pulled meditatively at his pipe ; Worthington, though he had no pipe or its equivalent, was also apparently thinking. Maclachlan turned uneasily in his deck-chair, and grumbled inarticulately, like a man who longs to talk about his grievances, but does not like to begin uninvited. Torrance, on principle, never took the least notice of this sort of thing, and thereby sometimes goaded the young man to the confines of madness. Beckford was more sympathetic.

‘What’s been rubbing you the wrong way, Mac ?’ he inquired with cheerful candour. ‘What’s Jakini been up to?’

Jakini had been Maclachlan’s ‘boy’ for about a month. No one ever filled that situation long.

‘Oh, he’s gone—the impudent brat !—*tawa’d*



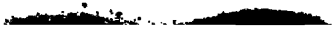
(run away) *pa li be*—the usual story. This morning—no boy with my tea! I slept on, and never heard the *lipenga*, and you may guess I caught it.'

'It' was evidently something very nasty, for Maclachlan made a face as if he had been swallowing vinegar.

'Then I yelled for my bath-water—yelled till I was hoarse—and no boy! I looked outside the door, and saw a pack of lazy little rascals toasting themselves round a fire. I shouted a dozen times for Jakini, and no one took the least notice, till at last one of them turns round, as cool as a cucumber, and says: "*Pa li be*," just as if I hadn't been able to see that for myself. So I yelled at them again, "Where is he?" and no one answered at first, and then another little black scoundrel turns round with a grin, and says "*Kaya!*"'

'*Kaya* means "I don't know," doesn't it?' put in Worthington timidly.

'It means that and a lot more!' retorted Maclachlan hotly. 'The way these wretches say it means, "I don't know, and be hanged to you!" or worse even than that. Human



nature couldn't stand that, you know. I flew out just as I was, pyjamas and all, and had him by the scruff of the neck in two twos. "Now," I said, in the intervals of shaking him, "where's Jakini? Has he gone home?" And, if you'll believe me, two or three of them at once drawled out, "*Kapena a na nka*," as calm as if they had been answering inquiries about their precious healths.'

And Maclachlan sat up and fairly ground his teeth at the recollection of his injuries, as he flung away the stump of his cigarette into the darkness.

'Excuse me,' ventured Worthington, 'but would you mind telling me again what it was they said, if—if it was nothing—objectionable. . . . I didn't quite catch—*kapena*, I think, is "perhaps."'

Worthington, as we have seen, was conscientiously trying to learn Chinyanja. We will hope that he did not hear a faint splutter which the graceless Maclachlan, in the midst of his wrath and disgust, was unable to suppress.

'*A na nka*, "he went,"' said Beckford quite

seriously. '*Kunka*, "to go," you know. *A* is "he," and *na* shows the past tense.'

'Can't think what these beggars want with past tenses and all that,' grumbled Maclachlan, breaking in on Worthington's mildly-apologetic thanks. 'We were persecuted with all those things at school, worse luck! but how should *they* get hold of them? There's that grammar that Torrance has got—a black book with red edges, for all the world like the "*Principia Latina*"—and when I looked into it, I'm bothered if there weren't nouns and adjectives, and cases and declensions, and all the rest of it. Now, what I want to know is, where the niggers got *them*?'

He spoke as if their possession of the parts of speech which had tormented his boyhood were a fresh injury.

'From the ancient Egyptians,' said Beckford with unmoved gravity. 'Don't you know that Dr. Henry translated that book from hieroglyphic inscriptions on the rocks of Chirobwe?'

Worthington, who was always on the lookout for traces of 'Egyptian influence,' and had read 'She' almost as seriously as he had done

Herodotus, peered round through his spectacles as if suspecting a joke, yet half hoping there might be none. But it was too dark to make much of Beckford's face. Maclachlan grunted resentfully.

'You needn't play your jokes on a fellow, Beck. . . . I believe Henry made the whole thing up out of his own head. . . . If you think I'm such an idiot as to swallow anything you choose to tell me——' Mac certainly was unreasonably irritable that evening, and lost the thread of his sentence among his various grievances. 'It's bad enough, what with the Chief——'

'What's *he* done, Mac?' inquired Beckford soothingly.

'Oh, just my inf—I mean, my usual luck! I don't know what possessed him to come poking his nose round there just at that blessed moment; but there he was, and there was I, in my pyjamas, holding that boy by the throat. . . . Of course he must go and squeal like a stuck pig——'

'Not Mr. Torrance, surely?' inquired Worthington, with gentle gravity.

It was one of the things which made Cyril

Worthington a joy to his friends that—simple as he was in many ways, and little as he appeared to know of human nature—he possessed a hidden fund of dry humour, apt to manifest itself on unexpected occasions.

‘No, hang him! It was that—— Oh, I beg your pardon, Worthington—I’m always forgetting you’re here; but they’re enough to try the patience of a saint and spoil his manners into the bargain! And then——’

Maclachlan drew the veil of a discreet silence over the interview, in which Torrance had told him some home-truths, as, for instance, that if he thrashed boys on little or no provocation (which had yesterday been the lot of the unlucky Jakini), he could not be surprised when they ran away.

‘But I can’t understand it,’ he went on. ‘A man that’s been out here as long as he has—and a clever man, too—that he shouldn’t know them any better.’

‘At any rate, he knows how to keep *his* boys,’ interjected Beckford, with a yawn which was huger than it need have been. He had no mind for a discussion of the Chief and his

possible weaknesses. 'Musa's been with him ever since he came out last, and I don't know how long before. Very decent chap, Musa. I say, Worthington, I don't know how you feel, but I know I shan't want to get up by *lipenga* if I don't turn in soon.'

He hesitated ; he was about to offer advice of a like purport to Maclachlan, but knew by experience that it would not be gratefully received, and would probably result in his sitting up till past midnight. So he simply said, 'So long, Mac,' and retired, accompanied by Worthington, whose polite 'Good-night' was but indifferently responded to.

'It's no use taking much notice,' he said, when they had reached his room, in a corner of which Worthington's folding stretcher had been set up. 'I don't think he's feeling well ; the heat tries him a good deal, and he hasn't been long enough here to get used to it. But it's awful rot his talking about Torrance not understanding the natives—*Torrance!*' To Beckford's mind it was as if the new cabin-boy had said that the captain of the ship knew nothing about navigation. 'He's always having trouble with his

boys; he spoils them first, and thrashes them when they presume on it.'

'Then, it's to be hoped your new protégé won't come within his range; he appears to me to have infinite capacity for being spoilt, and very little for being thrashed.'

'I don't know,' said Beckford; 'he's wiry. But'—and he lowered his voice, suddenly remembering that the clay walls did not quite meet the roof, and that the house was not otherwise sound-proof—'Maclachlan shall have precious little to do with him if I can prevent it.'

'When—did—Mr. Maclachlan—come out?' asked Worthington. His sentence was punctuated by his struggles with a shoe-string, which had got into a hopeless knot.

'Last October,' said Beckford grimly.

This, it will be remembered, was July.

The *Ilala* left early next morning, with Worthington on board and a lot of Mlozi's ivory as well. He said he was very much better for his trip, and had enjoyed his stay immensely, bade good-bye to Torrance three times over, under the impression that he had

not yet done so, and made Beckford promise to write to him when he had time, and, more particularly, let him know how Chapenga was getting on.

His sensitive conscience was a little uneasy about Chapenga (as, in fact, it was about most people to whom his attention was called, though his extreme consideration for their feelings made his efforts on their behalf so tentative that they frequently came to nothing), and he had that very morning found an opportunity of waylaying that youth and trying to make an impression on him. What the impression was can only be dimly guessed ; and no one would ever have known of the attempt being made, but that it leaked out some weeks later through the medium of a dramatic representation, wherewith Chapenga was caught favouring a few select friends. Maclachlan, the first to discover what was going on, laughed and applauded ; but Beckford, failing to take the same view of the matter, pulled the astonished Chapenga out of the circle and boxed his ears soundly, thereby furnishing Chapenga with food for reflection. It is, I am afraid, to the

credit of his penetration rather than of his budding moral sense that he did not try to quit Beckford's service for Maclachlan's. The young rascal was, as we have already seen, a student of character in his way.

The steamer and Mlozi both being gone, Karonga's once more settled down to such routine as it possessed in those days. Life, Chapenga found, was not all sympathy and sweet biscuits ; but, on the whole, it was more tolerable than he had ever known before. It began to dawn on him that work and cleanliness were not in themselves hateful things ; even Sheikh Omar had not induced him to do more than put up with them as necessary evils. He was fain to walk warily and restrain his desire for unconsidered trifles, not so much from incipient impulses of honesty, as because it was exceedingly difficult to appropriate things here without being found out. Chapenga had a tin biscuit-box wherein to stow his private property ; but he had nowhere to keep it, except the hut, which was the common dormitory of himself and a dozen other boys, and therefore not a convenient place for examining his trea-

sure, nor, though he rolled up the box inside his sleeping-mat, was he quite sure that one or two of his companions might not take advantage of his absence in the daytime, and steal in to overhaul his deposit. With a touching confidence in the honour and probity of the white man, Chapenga one day—some weeks after Mlozi's departure—brought his box to Beckford and asked him, as a great favour, to grant it an asylum in his own room, throwing out dark hints, at the same time, that the honesty of his mates was not above suspicion.

Beckford was quite willing, and eyed the box with some amusement.

‘What’s in it?’ he asked.

‘My cloth,’ answered Chapenga with unctuous readiness, meaning thereby his spare best calico, ‘and my knife that you gave me, sir, and my beads.’

Chapenga had amassed quite a respectable provision of beads, some of which, to do him justice, were ‘tips’—coined money was not then in use at Karonga’s, certainly not for the purpose of tipping small boys—while others were acquired in the course of the extensive com-

mercial transactions in which Chapenga was frequently engaged. That none of this wealth had yet another source, I am not prepared to affirm.

Beckford weighed the treasure-chest in his hand.

'It seems heavy,' said he; 'let's see your *chuma*.'

And before the terrified Chapenga could protest he had lifted the lid. The first thing that met his eyes was a black-and-white silk necktie of his own; the next a stout leather pocket-book—one of those closing with a flap that tucks into a slit—with a pencil and spaces for a diary, and an almanac at the beginning. It looked familiar, somehow, and Beckford opened it, half mechanically, to see what it was, but hastily closed it again, looking exceedingly red and embarrassed. The fact is that the book was full of Torrance's writing, and before Beckford had fully realized what he was looking at, his eye fell on the words :

'Beckford very decent fellow, not afraid of soiling his hands with work. . . .'

Chapenga was preparing to emit a dismal howl, and to asseverate that he never saw the

things in his life before, and had no more notion than the dead how they got there. But with Beckford's eye upon him, the tears refused to leave their sources, and the voluble tongue faltered.

'It must have been an evil *jinn*, Mzungu, who put those things into my box.'

'Nonsense! you know better than that,' said Beckford, declining for the present to enter into any argument about the *jinn*. 'This is my neck-tie, and this is the Mzungu Wamkulu's book.'

The wretched Chapenga's ready wit deserted him under the scrutiny of those cold gray eyes, and vague but awful visions of imminent judgment rose up before him.

'I shall not thrash you this time, but you must come with me to the Mzungu Wamkulu, and give him back the book, and say '—he was about to say 'you're sorry,' but was sadly conscious that this would be a ghastly libel on the truth, and discreetly substituted—'that you took it.'

Chapenga's distress became frantic; he cast himself down, and clung to Beckford's knees.

'Oh, chief! don't—don't send me to the

Mzungu Wamkulu! He is terrible—he is cruel—he will beat me!

'If he does,' said Beckford grimly, 'it is only what you deserve, Chapenga.'

He felt the situation somewhat absurd, however, as he stooped down and tried to untwist the small wiry arms. But Chapenga's powers of holding on were, like his lung-power, to put it mildly, unexpected. He clung like a small octopus, and howled heartrendingly, weeping undisguised tears, moreover; for he had never learnt to consider them a disgrace. Beckford debated within himself whether to summon Jacob to his assistance.

'Shut up!' he said sharply, half angry and half tickled with the absurdity of the whole thing, and then began to walk across the room, dragging his encumbrance with him. Chapenga suffered the bricks to be swept with him for a little; then the cruel conviction dawned on him that there were others besides Sheikh Omar whose soul would not spare for a boy's crying, and he made up his mind that, since he would have to go to Torrance any way, he might as well go on his feet.



VI

It was after breakfast, and 'between bugles'—in other words, the hottest time of the day, when even the virtuous rest if they can; but Torrance was sitting bolt upright before a big book adding up figures, with his thick black eyebrows running into one.

'Oh, it's you, Beckford? Come in, man—what is it? You and the youngster got a *mlandu*, eh?'

Beckford answered with a preternatural stiffness and solemnity; he was really annoyed, and did not like his errand. Some men would have saved themselves the trouble; they would have knocked Chapenga down to begin with, then recovered the stolen goods, and dismissed (in other words *choka'd*) him, and washed their hands of him for ever. But that was not Beckford's way.

84 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

'Chapenga has been a very bad boy, Mr. Torrance. I suppose this is your book he has taken? Hand it over, Chapenga.'

The abject Chapenga did as he was bidden. Torrance opened the book, and looked at it for a moment. Then he held it up, and sternly demanded :

'Who did this?'

The open page which met Beckford's view presented a curious appearance. Right across Torrance's entries of ivory and beads and cloth and temperature (both of the atmosphere and of feverish patients) and lists of carriers was drawn, in the most primitive style of art, a figure in spectacles, with an open book in its hand, which bore a weird but unmistakable likeness to Mr. Worthington. Above and below and on either side was scrawled the artist's autograph, after this fashion, 'Chapenga kalonga station,' along with many zigzags, dashes, and flourishes such as, all the world over, delight the heart of the small boy with a pencil and the run of somebody else's paper.

'Well,' said Torrance again, 'who did this?'

Chapenga tried to pluck up heart enough to

advance the *jinn* theory, but he could not. Torrance was a very terrible person to him, and one with whom he had not, up to this hour, been brought into direct contact. So he said, in a very small voice :

‘*Kaya.*’

‘That is a lie!’ said Torrance sternly. ‘Who wrote your name here?’ and he pointed an accusing finger at that effort of penmanship.

Chapenga, I suppose, saw that the game was up, and he had a fine sense of the fitness of things, which forbade him to throw away inventions needlessly—otherwise he would have gone on lying unabashed to the end of the chapter. So he capitulated by falling on his knees with a doleful howl.

‘I did it! Sheitan entered into me and made me do it. Don’t kill me, great chief! don’t kill me this time, and I will never do it again!’

Beckford discovered something wrong with the lining of his hat, which necessitated such close inspection that his face was completely hidden. Torrance had either more self-command or less sense of the ridiculous, for not a muscle twitched in his face.

‘Do you know that you are a very bad boy? This is my book in which I write down the things that have to be remembered. It is more than two weeks since I lost it. Kasalota was very ill then, and I wrote down the times when he was to have his medicine. If I had forgotten it—because there was no book—Kasalota might have died. And if Kasalota’s father had come and said to me, “Who killed my son?”——’

The cold gray eyes under the black eyebrows seemed to pierce Chapenga through and through; he felt them coming out at the small of his back. They were worse than Sheikh Omar’s. He felt as if he were going to be consumed then and there, and burst out with a fresh howl, as of one in unendurable torment.

‘Oh, Mzungu! oh, my lord! forgive me—I will never do it again. I have been a bad boy. I stole your book, and I stole Musa’s beads—I have stolen many things; and I——’ Here Chapenga became unintelligible.

Torrance looked at Beckford in some perplexity.

‘What have I said or done to scare the creature like this? He must have heard



worse any day from that Saidi, or whatever his name is.'

Beckford bent over the struggling, shrieking little bundle of misery on the floor, and took hold of him reassuringly—he was more than half afraid the child would work himself into a fit—before he answered :

'It was the way you looked at him, I think. It was—well, rather formidable, to anyone that didn't know you.'

'Oh ay, I understand. I've seen the like of this before. The evil eye, you know. Oh, come, this won't do! We don't want to hurt you, boy!'

'You mean he thinks you were trying to "overlook" him, as we say in Devonshire?'

'Yes, that's it ; it frightens them out of their wits. Hold on, Chapenga—canny, canny now!'

Between the two of them, Chapenga was picked up and patted on the back, and with some difficulty convinced that he was not in danger of immediate extinction.

'Poor wee smout!' whispered Torrance compassionately, 'he's shaking all over. Wonder if we ought to give him anything to settle his

spirits? I've got some ginger-ale left—that couldn't hurt him.'

'And—about a thrashing?' asked Beckford, not without ironical intention.

'Oh, we can let him off that. I dare say the fright's been enough for him this time. It was a worse one than I meant to make it. I assure you, Beckford, I never thought of that evil eye business when I looked at him.'

So Chapenga, instead of receiving the just reward of his doings, was petted and comforted, and given to drink of that mysterious beverage—got at by driving a glass ball down into a bottle—which he had often, with envious eyes, watched Azungu consuming. It answered his utmost expectations, and acted, like the n-penthe of the ancients, as a healing draught—so much so, indeed, that Torrance thought it would be as well, after all, not to let him go without an admonition.

'Musa, just bring my riding-whip out of the bedroom, will you? Now, Chapenga, do you see this?'

It was an elaborate instrument with a carved silver knob, a present long ago at home, and

Torrance religiously carried it about with him wherever he went, in the hope and intention of successfully importing a horse some day.

‘ This is an English *chikoti*, and it hurts very much, I can tell you. I am not going to beat you to-day, because you have had a fright. It’s silly to think that people can kill you by looking at you, because they can’t. You’ll understand that better some day—at least, let’s hope so. I wasn’t looking at you to do you any harm with my eyes, but I was angry, because I don’t like my book spoilt, and because it’s not nice to have boys about the place who steal. That’s a dirty slave’s trick, Chapenga, and you know you’re a free boy now. So, now, I don’t want to be hard on you or worry you, but you must just understand that, if you steal anything again, you’ll catch it with this *chikoti*, and you won’t like that. No begging off then, remember.’ And Torrance looked so stern again that Chapenga said quite humbly that indeed and truly he would never take anything again, that he was Torrance’s child, and, in fact, nothing but a baby, and would be good in future, etc., etc., and so was dismissed.

As soon as he was out of sight and hearing, Torrance's features relaxed into a broad grin.

'Queer little beggar! I expect you do find him a handful, Beck. Do you mean to keep him on?'

'What can I do? I can't turn him adrift, to go to the bad altogether, for I do believe there's a lot in him, if one knew how to get at it. And I—well, I feel sort of responsible.'

'Yes,' Torrance nodded gravely and kindly. 'I don't say but you're right; but you'll have an awful bother with him yet. Why not send him to Bandawe?'

'I've thought of that—I wonder if it would be best for him. I'm half afraid of his being lost in a crowd of boys, and only the worst side of him getting a chance; and then what a frightful nuisance he'll develop into later! And then—I don't know that I have any right to—to—you know—to undertake anything, and then shift it on to someone else as soon as it becomes troublesome.'

'Maybe you're right, but don't let him wear on you. How did he learn to write, by-the-by? Oh, I remember: Maclachlan said you

were teaching him, but I didn't give any heed to it at the time. Look at that now—that *m* and that *n*; not half bad for the time he's been at it. He must be an uncommonly sharp little monkey. Can he read, too?"

'He's nearly through the first part of "Kanyaminyami,"*' replied Beckford, with some pride. 'Picking up English pretty quickly, too. Nothing the matter with his brains. I wish his moral sense were as advanced.'

'Common complaint! You might say the same thing of some men who haven't been dragged up in slavers' camps. Why, there are some——'

Torrance closed his jaws with a snap, as if biting off a forbidden subject.

'Perhaps that will come right in time. Don't worry, old man. He's wonderfully improved in appearance, at any rate. When you think

* The first reading-book used at the Blantyre Mission School. Its proper title, the reader may like to know, is, 'Kalata wakupunzitsira wa Chimang'anja'; but it is universally known as 'Kanyaminyami'—the Nettle—a word which occurs in one of the earlier sentences, and seems to have fascinated the imagination of native youth.

of what a skinny little scarecrow he was when you brought him in !'

'He does look better, certainly. After all, if one remembers what the poor little wretch has been through—— Did you ever see the scars he has about him? . . . You're busy, and I'm afraid I've kept you——'

'No — glad you came. I'd been hunting high and low for that book. I thought I must have put it away so carefully I couldn't find it. Well, see you at dinner. And, I say, never hesitate about coming if you want to speak to me. I know *you* can be trusted'—he laughed grimly—'not to waste a man's time about havers.'

So the daily round at Karonga's went on, and Chapenga swept and dusted, and washed cups and saucers, and brushed boots with exemplary care and intermittent assiduity, and acquired the arts of reading and writing, and transgressed and was reprimanded (verbally and tangibly), and repented, and transgressed again, and cherished (as he had done ever since he ran behind him to escape from Saidi) a devoted attachment to Beckford, and would



have done anything in the world for him except obey him when his back was turned. But while his moral progress was thus unsatisfactory, his outward man flourished apace; the growth which starvation and ill-treatment had checked took a fresh start, and the good and regular food and cleanliness soon changed the skinny little scarecrow into a healthy and tolerably good-looking boy, with small features, large eyes with long, curling eyelashes like a little girl's, plump cheeks, and a dark-brown skin, shining as if he had received the same amount of polish he bestowed on Beckford's boots. And when he was dressed in a clean *tewera*, and had a little red fez on his head, he looked the smartest boy in the station.

VII

CHAPENGA had been behaving beautifully for some weeks. No one could help noticing it. Even Torrance, who on principle was reluctant to praise, told Beckford that really he had made something of the boy. Only Maclachlan darkly hinted that this apparent accession of virtue was in reality but a subtle form of depravity. In the cynical way Maclachlan affected, he consistently depreciated everyone all round, and thus now and again blundered accidentally on the truth. This, I am sorry to say, was one of those cases.

Beckford congratulated himself that the good which he had always maintained was in the boy was beginning to show itself, and Torrance now and then went so far as to bestow on Chapenga a grim word or two of approval. But Maclachlan alternately laughed and grumbled ;

and Musa, when the matter was referred to in his hearing, grunted oracularly.

Musa was not having a good time just then. In fact, it became evident after a while to the white men themselves that Chapenga was a shining exception in a peculiarly evil world. Every day complaints came before Torrance thick and fast. Musa began to look thin and harassed, and once or twice had to be seriously rebuked for throwing things at boys when they provoked him beyond bearing. When asked what was wrong, he shrugged his shoulders, and said there was *nkondo* (war), but offered no theory to account for it. This boy was impudent, and that one could not be found, and the other had been bullying a smaller one, and two more had been separated by main force when rolling over and over in desperate combat. And, moreover, one and all were, so to speak, out on strike, persistently refusing to do the work demanded of them, on the plea, first, that 'this'—the particular thing they were told to do on any given occasion—'was not their work'; and, secondly, that they ought to be paid a great deal more than they actually received.

'It's nothing but *milandus* from morning to night,' said Torrance one evening at dinner. 'I can't think what's got into the boys.'

They were sitting in the veranda of Torrance's house, which was slightly larger than the one occupied by Beckford and Maclachlan. Musa was waiting at table, assisted by Chinene, who had not altogether escaped the prevailing epidemic, and looked listless and sullen.

'Last thing was Sankula came to complain.'

Sankula was a very plain but otherwise inoffensive, and, indeed, useful, old person, left behind long ago by a slave caravan, who, as it was impossible to restore her to her own people, earned her keep by pounding maize and cooking *nsima* for the boys at Karonga's.

'She said some of the young reprobates had been throwing stones at her, and broken her cooking-pots, and set your dog on her, Beckford. I had to give her two fathoms of calico to make up, and some sticking-plaster for her leg.'

'I don't understand how Gyp came to be there,' said Beckford, on whom these revelations could not fail to have an inspiriting effect.



'Chapenga asked me if he might take her out by the lake-shore this afternoon. 'He's the only boy she'll go with, and I let him. I hope it isn't a bad bite?'

'Oh, not much account—enough to make a *mlandu* of, that's all. The skin was just broken a wee bit. But it seems to me that either Gyp must have run away from Chapenga and attacked the old body, or else he must have been present at the affair. And yet surely Sankula would have identified him;—but he wasn't among those she mentioned.'

'I expect you'll find Chapenga's at the bottom of everything that's been going on,' said Maclachlan. 'It isn't in nature for any boy to be as good as he's been. I had my suspicions as soon as I saw him going about like an infant angel, with "Yes, sir!" and "No, sir!" as polite as you please, and looking as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth, and the others getting worse and worse all the time. I felt sure he was somehow putting them up to it, though I couldn't see how. It was a master-stroke of his, getting Gyp on his side. How he did it——'

'Hallo!' said Beckford.

The three looked at each other in silence for a moment ; then said Torrance :

'Musa, go and see who's been shooting behind Mr. Beckford's house.'

'I believe it's Chapenga,' said Maclachlan solemnly ; 'you see if it isn't. And you may think yourself lucky if he hasn't killed Gyp.'

'Somebody's hurt,' said Beckford impatiently, rising to his feet.

For, indeed, a most lamentable cry was now plainly to be heard. Beckford and Torrance hurried off, and met Musa returning with his report. The boys had been playing with Mr. Maclachlan's gun, and Chapenga was shot.

Chapenga was lying on the ground, a frightful spectacle ; but it was the other boys who, in their terror, were making most of the noise. Torrance and Beckford picked him up—he moaned pitifully when he was touched—and they thought the case was very bad indeed.

'He seems to be riddled with shot. . . . Blown him about inside out, I guess. . . . Can't see what's what till we get this washed off. . . .

Musa, make the boys bring a bath full of water, and get my big sponge and the brandy bottle. . . . What in thunder possessed Mac-lachlan to leave loaded guns about ?

It appeared on examination to be fully bad enough, though not quite so bad as Torrance had thought. He and Beckford spent the evening picking No. 4 shot out of Chapenga, who in the intervals of the operation gave his account of the affair. Jakini, now returned from his holiday and temporarily reinstated—some other boy having turned out far worse—in his master's good graces, had said that Mr. Maclachlan's gun was a better one than that of any other *mzungu* in the station, and they had adjourned to inspect it. Jakini and Chapenga had then taken it down and brought it into the back-veranda, and another boy had taken it to show how it was used, when, behold! it blew up. Thereupon Chapenga turned very faint, and Torrance administered a teaspoonful of brandy, which considerably revived him.

'*Che!*' he ejaculated, 'this is what Bwana Hamadi used to drink ; but he always hid the bottle when he saw Bwana Omar.'

'How did *you* know what was in Bwana Hamadi's bottle?' asked Beckford, but Chapenga found it convenient not to hear.

They made up a little bed inside Beckford's room, and, having done everything that seemed possible in the way of surgery, put the patient into it.

'The thing is to keep him quiet now,' said Torrance. 'If the bandages don't shift he may do all right, though I'm afraid it's pretty bad. I wish we had a doctor here.'

'Couldn't you give him a few drops of tincture of opium? That would make him sleep through the night, at any rate.'

Torrance shook his head.

'I don't like messing with these things unless a regular doctor's on hand. It says in the "Hints to Travellers" that it's only to be given to adults.'

'Chlorodyne, then—surely that's safe?'

'M—yes! I don't think that can hurt; let's give him ten drops. He's a plucky little kid, I must say; he never once yelled while we were pulling him about. That's more than you can say for some white boys.'

'I've heard him make noise enough when he wasn't hurt.'

'Exactly ; he'll do it fast enough, if he thinks it's going to do him any good. There, I think that's all we can do just now. I'll send Musa to stay with him till he goes to sleep. The boy who did it ought to do so by rights, but I'm afraid he won't be much use while matters are in a critical stage. I suppose I'll have to speak the *mlandu* now.'

'Don't trouble about sending Musa ; I'll stay.'

'Oh, as you like. I suppose you'll want something more to eat, though. I haven't forgotten that all this happened in the middle of dinner.'

'You might send Chinene over with something, if you don't mind. No hurry ; I shall have to wash and get straight first.'

'All right ;' and Torrance swung off into the darkness.

Chapenga slept all through the night, which was so far in his favour ; but when day came his state was found to be quite bad enough. There were still a large number of pellets dispersed about him, which could not be got at, or, at any

rate, not without a good deal of difficulty. Then, it was not easy to feed him after any satisfactory fashion ; but that was of the least importance, as he was in high fever. The boy who had caused the accident, or, to be just, who had been the most direct cause of it, at first ran away and hid himself, but, being dragged forth and into Torrance's presence, protested in great distress that he was very sorry, and hadn't done it on purpose. He did not meet the fate which he evidently dreaded, but had to expiate his carelessness by sitting beside Chapenga, and seeing that he did not jump from his bed and run out of the house, as he, being by this time quite light-headed, had a great desire to do.

It was now the hottest time of the year, the last few weeks before the rains. There was a plague of fires by day, and of mosquitoes by night. Beckford's was only a grass and mud house with a mud floor, where the dust could by no manner of means be kept under, and the rats rioted in the naked rafters of the roof. It was kept as decently as possible under the circumstances, but what can be expected of two



bachelors with raw boys to wait on them? Then, outside, the noises of a busy trading-station went on from sunrise to sunset and after; and after dark there was pretty sure to be the thumping of drums and stamping of dancers, from the space beyond the farthest huts on the land side. So that it was not a nice place to be ill in, and it is doubtful whether anything but a native boy would have pulled through. And Chapenga was tougher than most native boys.

Still, after three or four days Torrance looked very serious when he came out of Beckford's room, and said nothing; but went away and opened a packet of lemonade sherbet, a compound which all the Europeans, after one trial, had silently abjured for ever. The boys, however, regarded it as a species of heavenly nectar, and it was accordingly dispensed on occasion, as a special treat.

'Let him have anything he likes,' he said; 'it can't make much difference. What's that—steamer-whistle?'

A long, hooting call rang out over the shining levels of the lake.

'Go and see what she is, Musa. It can't be our boat already ?'

Maclachlan came sauntering in with Torrance's binocular, borrowed without asking, in his hand.

'It's the *Holy Joe*, I think,' he said, thus irreverently designating the mission steamer from Chisimulu, whose proper name, by-the-by, was the *Saint Columba*.

'If it is, then perhaps Dr. Bassett is on board,' said Beckford. 'He might be able to do something.'

'You seem in a great taking about that imp of yours,' remarked Maclachlan with some contempt. 'Not but what we should miss him, though. He's the only approach to anything amusing there is in this confounded hole. If it weren't for him and the mail—I hope they *have* brought us up our mails, by-the-by——'

The *Saint Columba's* whistle sounded again, and they hurried down to the landing-stage in time to see the little vessel come in. Her *gadamu* threw the hawser ashore, and the station-boys with much shouting made it fast, while Maclachlan, frantic with impatience, lifted



up his voice above the din to hail the skipper-engineer, who, grimed and weary, stood beside the port paddle-box.

‘Flanagan! hey, Flanagan! Have you got our mail?’

‘We have, and the doctor too, in case any of you are ill,’ replied Flanagan of the double entity, throwing a second rope, which was caught by Jacob. Beside him stood a tall, thin, clean-shaven man, dressed in white, with a little silver cross at his watch-chain, who smiled pleasantly, and lifted his helmet to Torrance.

‘I hope I’m not required,’ he said. ‘In any case, the mail is the best medicine. You look fit enough, Torrance, any way.’

‘Where’s this patient?’ said the doctor an hour or two later, after they had partaken of tea in the veranda; and, by-the-by, it occurs to the chronicler that it must appear to the reader as if the Company’s employés at Karonga Station were perpetually sitting in the veranda, either dining or having tea, which was by no means the case. But it is exceedingly unlucky, from that point of view, that so many things should have happened just while they were so engaged.

Beckford got up to lead the way.

'Oh, you've got him in here, have you? Quite right—quite right.' He cut short Beckford's half-apologetic and somewhat incoherent statement about there being no room in the boys' house. 'Only it isn't everyone who would have done as much. Now, could you hold him for me—so—till I see——' And the doctor became absorbed in his examination. 'It might have been worse,' he pronounced at last; 'but it's quite bad enough. With proper nursing, which is just what you can't give him here, I think we could bring him round. I should like to keep him under my own eye for a time. . . . Who did these bandages?'

'Torrance did the first time, and then he showed me. He knows a bit about ambulance work.'

'The carbolic dressings are all right; you'd better keep them on in the meantime. I must see what I can do about getting out those shot that are left. . . . Have you any more rags? That's right. . . . That carbolic solution will want a little more water—so. . . . Surely this is the little fellow Worthington was so full of



when he came back, the one who was rescued from the slavers ?'

'Yes ; I'm afraid Worthington has reason to remember him in more ways than one. I've recovered two handkerchiefs of his which I caught the young monkey wearing as a turban, some time after he left. I meant to send them, but haven't had a chance yet.'

'I'll take charge of them, and, what's more, I think you'd better let us take the boy himself down to Chisimulu. We've just had a nurse out from England, and he'll be well looked after and given every chance—in more ways than one, perhaps,' added the doctor seriously.

'I'm afraid you'll find him a difficult case, once he gets on his legs again. Worthington tried his hand on him when he was here.'

'Without much success ?—Worthington said as much. He also said that nothing would convince you there wasn't good stuff in the lad at bottom.'

'I know there is, doctor. He's been kicked about the world like a football, and he's jolly well learnt to look after Number One, and

small blame to him! But the boy's no coward, and there's nothing mean or spiteful about him. He'll tell lies as fast as he can speak, but I never knew him do it for the sake of injuring anyone else. And he isn't cruel. Gyp likes him, and that's a funny thing, because Gyp doesn't take to natives as a rule.'

'That speaks well for him,' said the doctor decisively, as he tucked in the end of a bandage.

'Don't you think so? And, then—well, a boy who's grown up in Mlozi's *boma* can't have much left to learn in the way of evil, can he? I've had to pull him up sometimes for using words he shouldn't, but—well, I do believe the boy *in himself* isn't nasty. I dare say you know what I mean, doctor.'

'Yes,' said the doctor gravely, 'I know. I have seen something of slave-gangs and slave-camps, and I agree with you that, if a boy comes out of one not utterly spoilt, there must be something in him that will make a man some day. . . . Well, we must see if he's fit to move by the time Flanagan wants to start. I don't think myself there's much risk about it.'



It's wonderful what these little brown bodies will stand in the way of shots and cuts and slashes. Illness—long illness, in a dull place—is quite another matter.'

Chapenga was conscious, but not in a state to join in the conversation, while under the doctor's hands. He was feeling very wretched, too ill, even, to be fretful ; in fact, he was nearing that stage when the sick native, especially the small boy, gives up and dies, merely from losing heart about himself. But he was not too far gone to take any interest in such an object as a new white man, and the doctor's entrance roused the listless little brain with a touch of pleasant excitement. Of course, his wits were very far from having their normal keenness, but he noticed with a critical admiration the oval, clearly-cut face, with its delicate mouth and slightly aquiline nose, the blue eyes and wavy, iron-gray hair worn away about the temples. He detected in it, not without awe, a certain likeness to Sheikh Omar, and feebly reflected that, after all, Azungu were very unlike each other, for this face could scarcely claim kin with Torrance's beetle-brows, square

jaws and black moustache, or Maclachlan's weakly handsome features, undecided chin and sleepy gray eyes. Beckford, again—Beckford was like a typical public-school boy grown a little older, only that description would have been Greek to Chapenga. He had blue eyes—at least, they were rather blue than gray—and a straightish nose, rather short and thick, a mouth and chin which were neither like Torrance's nor like Maclachlan's (you see how difficult it is to be definite in such matters, and what an appalling job it must be for the police to draw up descriptions of persons 'wanted'), a sandy, scrubby moustache, and ditto hair, which he kept cropped like a convict's for the sake of coolness and convenience. Also he was burnt all over, as far as the sun and air could reach him, to a nice brick red. There was one other point about him which must have struck the native mind, for, though he did not know it (most men have one or more native names they have never heard of, though they may be aware of one kept, as it were, for official use), the boys in the *kuchesisa* and the *tenga-tenga* men round their

camp-fires spoke of him as *Sekabwino* ('He laughs well').

But, if the doctor and Beckford did not much resemble each other in appearance, they were both Englishmen and West-Countrymen—in point of fact, Devonshire men—and perhaps this somehow showed in their faces, for Chapenga from the first instinctively classed them together. Perhaps, however, it was his ear rather than his eye which guided him, for he had noticed long ago, even before he understood a word of English, that Beckford had a quite different way of speaking from the two Scotchmen—and this though Torrance had a strong Northern accent and Maclachlan scarcely any—and now noted, for future reference, that the doctor spoke like Beckford and not like the others. He would have liked very much to have heard what they said to each other, but he was not equal to the effort of listening, and the greater part of their conversation was carried on out of his hearing. He accepted another fizzy drink with deep appreciation, and then composed himself for the night.

The doctor found him somewhat improved

next morning, but did not guess what had been the principal factor in the change.

'Flanagan says he will want three or four days here to overhaul the engines ; something went wrong with them yesterday morning. By that time, I think, we can move him quite easily. Sister Katharine will be delighted. This will be her first surgical case out here, unless someone has contrived to break a bone since the week before last. Perhaps we had better tell him soon, to avoid a shock ?'

'I'm afraid he'll get so wildly excited if he knows,' said Beckford. 'It might be better to wait a little longer.'

Chapenga, however, received the news with admirable calmness and composure, even when informed that a Donna—a mythical being, known to Chapenga only through the medium of photographs—would give him medicines and take care of him. After meditating for awhile, he opened his eyes languidly, looking more bird-like than ever, only it was a very sick bird this time, and said :

'Will the *mzungu* with the glass eyes be there ?'

‘Yes,’ said Beckford, and turned to the doctor in explanation. ‘He means Worthington. I’m afraid——’

But what he feared Beckford thought it better not to express.

VIII

CHAPENGA was carried on board the *Saint Columba* in a blanket, and they rigged up a little stretcher for him just astern of the deck-house.

He was prepared to enjoy his new experiences to the full. He had never before been so long and so continuously the object of attention (of desirable attention, that is); his tastes of such a blissful state of things—as when he had been rescued from Saidi, and when Torrance's remorseful concern had sobered his terror with doses of ginger-ale—had been all too short and fleeting. Now it was a case of having bandages removed morning and night, of having beautiful, shining and uncanny-looking instruments (which would have frightened some boys out of their wits) used on various parts of his small person, of finding himself an object of interested consultation on the part of two



Azungu, and being fed at intervals with small doses of soup ; also of being frequently sponged all over with tepid water by Peter—the stolid, but good-natured Yao boy, who was now expiating his carelessness by acting as hospital orderly. This was less agreeable, especially the drying part of the process ; but, then, the glory of it all !

Of course there was pain and unpleasantness enough (Chapenga, it should be said, was a little Spartan at bearing pain, once he was certain that it could not be escaped) to counter-balance these advantages ; but the doctor noted a distinct improvement in his patient by the time Chisimulu hove in sight, after ten days' steaming. When, moreover, he observed that Chapenga had begun to order Peter about with the air of a Caliph of Bagdad, he felt pretty sure that his treatment would prove successful in the end.

It was late in the afternoon when the *Saint Columba* approached the low, green shores of the little island. A strange sound came across the waters above the throbbing and plashing of the paddle-wheels, a sound Chapenga had never heard in his life : for the bell of St. Aidan's

Church was ringing for evening service. The little church, looking like a kind of basket, for it was built and roofed with grass, stood in the centre of the island ; the rays of the sun, just sinking behind the ridge of the western mountains, sparkled on the metal cross crowning the roof, the only bright point there was to catch them, for there were no glass windows. The bell was fixed in a tall tamarind-tree shading the west end. Round the church were grouped some more neat grass houses, from one of which a procession of white-clad children, two and two, was passing up to the church. Scattered about by the water's edge, and on the higher ground behind, were groups of round native huts with pointed roofs, the blue smoke of their wood-fires rising through the thatch. Here and there, too, smoke was rising from the garden-patches, where the people had been burning the old stalks of maize before hoeing ; but on the rest of the island the dry grass had been burnt off, and the young shoots were springing up.

All this while the *Saint Columba* had been coming nearer, but she had to take rather a roundabout course among the shoals before



reaching the landing-place ; and by the time she was made fast evensong was over, and the white-clad children came trooping out of church again. Chapenga, raising himself a little on one arm, regarded them with interest, and asked :

‘What are these ?’

‘These,’ said the much-snubbed Peter, glad to assert a small superiority for once, ‘are the boys who learn in the school.’

‘How do you know ?’ asked Chapenga with cold contempt.

And Peter hastened to add that it was Yohana the doctor’s boy who had told him that the boys had been singing to Mulungu in the grass house. Happening at that moment to catch sight of Yohana, he called him and appealed to him for confirmation.

‘Surely,’ said Yohana. ‘That,’ he went on, indicating the church, and thinking to be more intelligible to Chapenga, ‘is the house of Allah.’

But Chapenga would not accept this view without protest.

‘That is not so. The house of Allah is at Mecca. My master, Bwana Omar, had been there to *kucheza* with Him. He liked Bwana

Omar, and He liked the Anasala, but not the Azungu. The Azungu build houses for Mulungu—not Allah.'

I hope neither Worthington nor Beckford—nor, for that matter, Sheikh Omar—will be held responsible for this theology.

'Your Bwana Omar was a Mohammedan, and has gone to Jehannum,' said Yohana severely.

But a howl from Chapenga, which brought the captain to see what was the matter, checked the eloquence of this youthful dogmatist, and, happily, at this point the doctor, who had gone ashore, returned, in company with another Mzungu in a long black garment, tied round his waist with a black cord, and a person who could only be the Donna Beckford had spoken of. She had on a gray dress and a curious white thing on her head. She did not seem to be either old or young ; she was not pretty, or even nice-looking, according to Chapenga's standard of any other ; but, whatever she was, she was decidedly a novelty.

Sister Katharine stepped across the gang-plank, and came aft to the little bed behind the



deck-house, and picked up Chapenga's skinny brown paw in a big, white, soft hand, and looked at him out of kind gray eyes, unlike any eyes he had ever seen before.

'Poor little chap!' she said. 'Why, he's all skin and bone—no more weight than a baby. I could carry him in one hand, doctor!'

And she picked Chapenga up in her arms; and he, with his head unwontedly resting on a gray cotton shoulder, inhaled strange perfumes—for Sister Katharine had been doing various things with eucalyptus and antiseptic dressings before she went to church—and complacently waited for the next act of the drama. Then they all went ashore, and were shortly afterwards met by Worthington, whom Chapenga, recognising at once, greeted with an easy but somewhat disconcerting familiarity. Everybody tacitly agreed that it was not a time for resenting this sort of thing; only Worthington said aside to Sister Katharine on the first opportunity:

'He's a handful.'

And she promptly replied:

'I can see that.'

Then the doctor and Sister Katharine put Chapenga to bed in a nice clean house, with new *bango* mats on the floor and clean calico hung up all round the walls—fathoms and fathoms of calico, enough to clothe an army of *tenga-tenga* men—and a nice little canopy above the bed to prevent grass and dust and insects falling down on him out of the roof. Sister Katharine would not have a ceiling-cloth all over, lest it should afford a playground for rats and snakes and impede free ventilation.

It would be tedious to chronicle the details of Chapenga's convalescence, but I am afraid he never behaved himself as he ought, according to orthodox story-book rules, to have done ; in fact, this history will have been told to very little purpose if anyone fancies there was a single particle of Chapenga which could be called orthodox from any social or moral point of view whatever. He ought to have become under Sister Katharine's influence a changed and grateful little boy, and ended up as a model pupil of St. Aidan's ; whereas, if the truth must be confessed, his naughtiness kept pace with his convalescence, and he convalesced



faster every day. Also—which is not exactly according to rules—Sister Katharine became very fond of him, very much fonder than she was of the boys who did what she told them and gave no trouble, and very much fonder than she judged proper to let him see. At least, she *thought* she did not let him see it; but there were few things Chapenga could not find out when so disposed, and having made this discovery, he did not fail to turn it to account in his own fashion.

Peter, the good-natured and clumsy, was installed as hospital assistant. He was not clever or very easily impressed. He had something of the suspicious shyness of the mountaineer, and was sullenly distrustful of new people. But within a week or two he had made up his mind that Sister Katharine was a person to be liked and obeyed, and thenceforth gave her the full allegiance of his honest heart. His zeal being at first much greater than his capacity, he smashed various medicine - bottles, and brought about other catastrophes of a more or less unpleasant character. He was so distressed on these

occasions that he quite weighed on Sister Katharine's spirits, and she had to run the risk of making him think lightly of the damage, in order, as she said, to keep him from going about looking as if he had just come from a funeral. But unlike some boys, whose repentance is only the precursor of wilder devastations, Peter became more careful in his dealings with perishable objects ; and he was so genuinely anxious to learn, and Sister Katharine so cheery and patient, that he completely went back on his former reputation, and became a quick, handy boy, who could even be trusted to carry a clinical thermometer from one house to another without dropping it.

For two or three weeks after Chapenga's arrival at Chisimulu it was considered necessary for someone to sit up with him at night, and this office usually devolved upon Peter, upon whom it was impressed that he was to hand Chapenga water if he was thirsty, and knock at Sister Katharine's door if he showed symptoms of distress. Sister Katharine, who was accustomed to awake at intervals, would look in now and then, as often as not to find both boys

peacefully asleep. But one night—I think it was about a fortnight after Chapenga's arrival—she was aroused by an unusual noise, and sprang up with a dire foreboding that something highly irregular was going on. Hastily slipping on her dressing-gown, she opened the door, and by the dim rays of the nightlight beheld nurse and patient rolling over and over on the matting, grunting and gasping, and uttering half-smothered yells. To say that Sister Katharine was aghast would be to convey but a faint idea of her feelings. Her heart was in her throat ; but, fortunately, this circumstance did not have a paralyzing effect on her. She flew at the boys, seized Peter—who, of course, was uppermost—by the shoulders, dragged him off with a dexterous jerk, and shook him with a vigour which both surprised and bewildered him. Then she pulled up Chapenga, got a light, and found, to her great relief, that, though the bandages had shifted a little, there was no harm done. It was Peter, in spite of his superior size and weight, who had sustained the damage, for when daylight came he had one or two bites and scratches to

be dressed, but, happily, nothing of any consequence. However, once his wounds were bound up, like the good-natured soul he was, he bore no malice.

‘And now,’ said Sister Katharine, having scolded both boys and settled Chapenga back again in bed, ‘I want to know what it’s all about.’

It was not easy to get at the bottom of the matter, but it finally appeared that no less a person than the doctor was the *casus belli*. They had quarrelled because they entertained different views with regard to his name. Chapenga had maintained that he was called ‘Basseti,’ whereas Peter, with the stubborn tenacity of his nation, stuck to it that he was *Dotolo*: for did not Che Bekifort and Che Torrance, and even the Donna herself, call him so? And, like the battle over the gold and silver shield, the dispute might have lasted on indefinitely had not Sister Katharine come in to interrupt it, and afterwards explained the matter to the satisfaction of both, winding up with :

‘You’re two very silly little boys, and I can’t



have this happen again. You lie down in that corner, Peter, and go to sleep. I am going to stay with Chapenga for the rest of the night, and I'll tell the doctor in the morning.'

This she did, and the doctor reprimanded them both, and in private laughed over the story till he cried, and Worthington, next time he wrote, told it to Beckford, who did likewise.

IX

At last Chapenga was once more able to stand on his feet, and began to go about with a pensive, semi-invalidish air and the 'infant angel' expression which Maclachlan had remarked on a former occasion. It is to be hoped, and, indeed, judging by the event, it may be presumed, that the expression was not this time the mask of designs of exceptional depravity ; but certainly no cathedral chorister in a surplice could have looked more innocent and saintly than Chapenga.

It was one lovely morning, after a pouring wet night (for we were well into the rains by this time), when the sky was one dazzle of soft white clouds on a sapphire-blue background, and the lake danced with points of light, and the whole earth smelt of freshness and growing, that Chapenga, being up and dressed, though

not as yet considered strong enough to be set to any task, thought that he might as well take his walks abroad and explore St. Aidan's. The quadrangle in front of the church, in which some cypresses and blue-gums were being coaxed to grow, was quite deserted, save for one or two sweepers; but the sounds pervading the place testified to the fact that everybody was busy somewhere. Chapenga sauntered across to a grass building, whence proceeded a lively buzz of voices, resolving itself, as he came nearer, into 'P-a, *pa*—p-e, *pe*,' 'Three and four;' 'Three times two,' and the like, repeated alternately by one voice and in chorus. The window, or, rather, the sashless openings screened with unbleached calico, had purposely been placed too high for casual little boys to look in; but Chapenga, inserting his toes into a space where the bamboo binders of the frail structure offered a sufficient support, gave a spring, pulled himself up with his hands, and, pushing the calico to one side, peeped in. Just under him he saw a row of boys seated at a desk, making pothooks on their slates under the superintendence of a bronze-coloured

teacher of monumental seriousness, with a face like an old Egyptian king cut in granite. A little further off, Yohana, whose acquaintance we have already made, was pointing with a stick to a spelling-sheet on the wall; while beyond him, again, Sister Katharine was being informed by a slightly more advanced reading class that 'we eat tamarinds,' that 'the ich-neumon-fly buzzes,' 'the drum is heard,' and 'people smoke tobacco.' Chapenga, who had got far beyond those interesting facts, having even, under Beckford's tuition, begun to grapple with Cain, Abel, and the Flood, in the second part of the Primer, was filled with a boundless contempt for these stumblers, and would have sniffed audibly had he not remembered that he did not wish to be discovered just yet. Three or four more classes were being taught by native pupil-teachers, and, at the further end of the room, Worthington was standing before a blackboard, trying to make figures on it with a piece of chalk worn down to its utmost possibilities. It is not always easy to get chalk on Chisimulu Island.

'Two and three?' said Worthington.



‘Sikkisi,’ said the class with one voice.

‘No, no—think a little.’

This lesson was given in English. Even the native teachers usually called the numbers by their English names; for it is not easy to perform arithmetical operations after this fashion: ‘Five and two and ten and five and four;’ or, ‘Five and four times two tens and five and three,’ and so on.

‘You, Chisala, how much is two and three?’

Chisala stared blankly, and the next boy ventured on ‘Four.’ The next, with cheerful readiness, announced, ‘Sikkisi.’ The class, individually and collectively, then made various shots—so many that it seemed incredible no one should have blundered on the right answer, but no one did. Worthington took out a voluminous handkerchief, and mopped his forehead.

‘Now you try, Philip. Hold up two fingers.’

‘Jee-rusalem!’

It was a voice behind Chapenga that uttered this exclamation, a queer voice, pitched higher than that of any European Chapenga had

hitherto encountered ; though to him they all appeared to talk out of the tops of their heads.

It went on :

‘What are you doing up there, little boy?’

Chapenga turned his head very cautiously, still clinging with fingers and toes, and saw a Donna, a new kind of Donna, whom he was not at all sure whether he liked or not. She had glass eyes like Worthington ; but they were of a different sort, since they pinched the top of her nose, and had no wires going behind the ears, and the brown eyes behind them were as unlike Worthington's as any eyes could well be. She had a very white, smooth skin, no colour in her cheeks like Sister Katharine, and the hair, as much of it as could be seen for a big and very unbecoming sun-hat, was black and short and curly all over her head. She had on a white dress—at least, Chapenga would have called it white, innocent in the fine shades of colour ; it was actually of unbleached linen—and a leather belt round her waist with a lot of little steel chains fastened to it, and the most fascinating objects in the world—things

it would be a joy for ever to examine at leisure—dangling from the ends of them.

'I guess you'd better come down, little boy,' pursued this new Donna. 'This school-house won't stand much climbing over.'

Chapenga surveyed her in mild wonder, his head very much on one side, and finally descended slowly, as if he had been asked to stay there much against his will, and were too tired to show any great eagerness when relieved.

'You're the boy from the North-End, aren't you—the one that was kidnapped by the slavers and hurt in a gun accident? How are you now?'

'I am a little better,' lisped Chapenga softly.

He could understand most of what she said, but preferred to reply in Chinyanja.

'Poor little coon!' said Miss Adams. 'So you're looking round the place, are you? Have you ever seen a school before?'

'No,' said Chapenga.

He was not sorry for companionship, and this Donna promised to be entertaining. So, if not actually in a tender and confiding mood,

he thought good to seem so, and slipped a small hand into Miss Adams', saying :

' Let us go and see the girls' school.'

Miss Adams was a visitor at St. Aidan's. She really belonged to the Scotch Mission over in the Domwe Hills, and, being in need of change, had taken a holiday and a trip hither, arriving about a week before Chapenga made her acquaintance. They found her disconcerting, but amusing. The Archdeacon and the doctor thought her more the latter than the former ; the Reverend Cyril Worthington was distinctly and undisguisedly afraid of her. Sister Katharine and she were the best of friends.

So Chapenga was conducted by Miss Adams to the girls' school, and, instead of climbing up and peeping in at the window, he looked in legitimately at the door, like any other visitor. He had seen girls before, though he had never had occasion to regard them with special attention ; but never girls like these, in neat white frocks edged with red braid, and generally washed and oiled and shining all over. Some of them turned their heads and giggled



a little ; but clearly they did not think him of great importance, and Chapenga returned the compliment. Two Donnas—objects of greater interest than the girls, and known to Europeans as Sister Emily and Miss Carver—were conducting the exercises, with the assistance of several pupil-teachers. Miss Adams was afraid of disturbing the lessons, and would not let Chapenga stay too long, and he followed willingly enough.

‘Donna,’ he said meekly, as they turned away, ‘what is that big box over there?’ He indicated one end of the girls’ schoolroom.

Miss Adams peeped in once more before finally closing the door.

‘That? Oh, that’s the harmonium—*limba*, you know. There’s another in the church, a bigger one. That’s the church.’

They went up to the church, and circumambulated it, Chapenga still holding Miss Adams’ hand. When they had once more reached the west door, Chapenga looked up in her face with the most winning sweetness, and said :

‘Let’s go in.’

The door stood open. Miss Adams drew the curtain which hung inside it, and they went in. She was a Presbyterian, and there were some things here which, strictly speaking, she didn't approve of; but she always felt a sort of reverent restfulness in the simple little building. The wide eaves protected the windows from the sun, the floor was neatly covered with the finest palm-leaf matting, which also lined the walls, there was a brass lectern (sent out from home, and popularly known as the *kabawi*, or hawk), and a carved-wood pulpit, jointly constructed by the Arch-deacon and the doctor. The gold cross on the white-draped Communion-table, flanked by the candlesticks and the two vases of pink and white lilies, caught the eye amid the cool, blue shadows.

Chapenga gazed, wide-eyed, for a minute or two, and Miss Adams hoped that he was impressed. Perhaps he was, in a dim way; perhaps, also, he was speculating whether the house where Sheikh Omar had gone to pay his respects at Mecca was like this. But if so, his reflections were of short duration; for he

soon spied the American organ in the chancel, and said :

‘I want to see the *limba*.’

Now, you would not have suspected this small, keen, matter-of-fact soul, toughened in an uncommonly hot furnace of life, of harbouring ideals; but Yohana, who was in the choir and sang fairly well, had during the voyage down the lake told him things about the *limba* which stuck in his mind and developed into a wonderful longing to see and hear that instrument. His highest conception of melody at present was Maclachlan's concertina, to which he had listened in mute rapture on various occasions, and for whose sake, as long as he played (the repertoire included ‘Clementine,’ ‘Swanee River,’ and a few other things; Chevalier was not then the fashion), he was prepared to forgive Maclachlan his many and grievous shortcomings. Once he found the concertina lying about in its owner's room during his absence, and tried to play on it himself, a proceeding suddenly interrupted by an exit more speedy than dignified.

But here was the *limba* in actual bodily

presence. Chapenga laid a hesitating hand on it, as if to assure himself of its reality by sight as well as touch ; then, as if it were a thing to be caressed, began patting it all over, till Miss Adams, mindful of finger-marks, had to call him to order.

'Would you like to hear it? What's your name, by-the-by?'

'I am Chapenga,' said that gentleman with dignity.

'Chapenga ; I'll remember that. Mind you stick to it, Chapenga, and don't let them call you Joe or Dick or Tom or anything else. Now, would you like to hear the noise that this thing makes?'

Of course Chapenga desired it above all things ; so Miss Adams opened the *limba*, and sat down before it, and put her feet on the pedals and began to play. The waves of sound rose and filled the little grass church as well as any great organ could have done the aisles of a cathedral ; they swelled and sank and rose again and floated across the quadrangle to the printing-office, where the type-setting boys giggled to each other in pure



enjoyment; and the Archdeacon, who was correcting proofs, and feeling rather tired and discouraged, lifted his head and wondered who could be playing, and sighed, and wished that Worthington, who filled that office on Sundays, could do it as well. Poor Worthington had the soul of a musician, but no technique.

Miss Adams stole a look at Chapenga's face in the middle of the chorale she was playing, and decided that she need not ask him whether he liked it; so she played on to the end, and then said:

'Chapenga, can you sing? Try; now, sing this;' and she struck a note and sang it.

Chapenga threw back his head and opened his mouth with an imitation of Miss Adams' action which would have convulsed her had she seen it; but she was solely intent on the sound which issued from the small brown throat. Her eyes opened wider in pleased surprise.

'Now sing this;' and she struck another note.

Chapenga piped up sweet and clear as any thrush, and perfectly true. Most Africans

have a good musical ear, and he—perhaps to compensate him for other disadvantages—had been born with a better one than the average, also a voice which any choir would have been glad to possess. How it had hitherto escaped utter ruin through miscellaneous shrieking and yelling, not to mention exposure and hard fare, is one of the things we must be content to leave unexplained.

Miss Adams, so she said afterwards, could have hugged the boy on the spot, though quite aware that, from a moral point of view, he was probably very far from deserving it. She ran him up the scale as far as he could go, and then, being seized with misgivings that the Archdeacon might not like the church organ used for a singing-lesson (she had no scruples herself that way), brought the voice-trying to a conclusion and struck into 'Ewing.'

And the Archdeacon, tearing his hair over the rough proof of the new spelling-book—of which only a facsimile, which I mercifully withhold, could give the reader any idea—began to consider whether it were possible, without hurting Worthington's feelings or unduly



burdening Miss Adams—seeing she had come in order to recruit her health—to ask her to play the organ, at least once, next Sunday. He was himself passionately fond of music, and, worried and jaded as he was, felt even these distant snatches inexpressibly refreshing. I suppose it was some fellow-feeling for the boys at the cases that made him forbear from checking them when they began to hum, quite audibly :

‘ Ndi nkondo i to leka kwa M’lungu konkuja ;
Ndi ukapolo wa ta, udano wachoka. . . . ’

one after another taking up the tune, till at last they burst into full chorus. The Archdeacon was no martinet, and he did not object, simply because it was irregular, to their blowing off steam for once in a way.

That night at dinner the conversation turned on Chapenga. Miss Adams detailed her interview with him, and gave it as her opinion that he was decidedly an interesting boy.

‘ But I’m afraid his religious sense is quite unawakened. I couldn’t get out of him that

he even knew what conviction of sin meant. What do you think ?

She asked the question of Sister Katharine across the table with an easy directness which was a little startling. Worthington looked away in painful embarrassment ; he was terribly jarred by what he took for an utter lack of reverence. Sister Katharine did not at the moment find it quite easy to answer, and the doctor came to her assistance.

‘Would you expect that in an average healthy boy of his age ?’

‘Doctor !’ She looked round at him in hurt, indignant surprise, while a dark flush ran up the delicate, sallow cheek. ‘You don’t mean—you wouldn’t say that the grace of God can’t reach the youngest, the most ignorant child ?’

‘Certainly not,’ said the doctor, gently and gravely. ‘But doesn’t it seem a little bit presumptuous for us to try and determine the ways by which it will come ? I think, sometimes, we must believe that the seed springs and grows, we know not how.’

‘I believe,’ said the Archdeacon, ‘Sister Katharine’s impression is that, if Chapenga can



be said to have any religion at all, it is centred, for the present, in Beckford of Karonga's.'

'Well, yes, I think so!' and Sister Katharine's blue eyes twinkled.

'And that's as good as we could expect, so far.'

'But——' Miss Adams had put her elbow on the table, and was resting a pointed chin on a small nervous hand—it was a trick she had when she was interested ; and, somehow, no one thought of objecting to it in her—and looked across at the Archdeacon in genuine distress and perplexity. 'Do you think——' She came to a stop there. It was not often she was at a loss, and Worthington, hitherto somewhat abashed by her, looked up in surprise.

Lucile Adams had been trained in the belief that you ought to deal with people by a certain process—substantially the same in all cases, though the details might vary with the individual—of working on their feelings till they were crushed by a sense of their overwhelming wickedness, when you could begin to apply the consolation. She had tried this plan in Cincinnati for some years, with more or less

success ; and though she never quite liked some of the details of 'revival work' as her friends carried it out, she set this down to her own unregenerate nature, and tried all the harder, never touched by a doubt as to the method. Since then her experience among unsophisticated human beings, to whom her formulas meant nothing, and who sometimes seemed to her to have no feelings to appeal to, had somewhat shaken that belief, though she would not admit it to herself. And here were people, of whose sincerity and devotion (mistaken as she thought them in some things) she could have no doubt, actually saying right out what she had never ventured to put into words.

'Don't you think so?' said the Archdeacon. 'Gradual growth, gradual teaching—it's the "line upon line" everywhere. The human love which Chapenga and his fellows can grasp leads them on to the apprehension of the Higher, which is beyond them at present. Doesn't St. John say as much?'

'I see,' said Miss Adams thoughtfully, after a pause. 'But it all seems so easy, just like plants growing.'

'And you think we can't get on without a cataclysm? But, if you'll think for a moment, you know the authority for the seed growing insensibly.'

'I always keep Stanley's "Life of Arnold" handy,' said the doctor, 'and read a bit when I'm inclined to be discouraged. I think he was one of the greatest men that ever lived. It seems so ridiculously simple to take the average boy as he is, and not as we think he ought to be, and see what we can make of him that way. And yet why hadn't anyone thought of it before? And what applies to boys applies, in a great degree, to natives. Every missionary ought to know that book by heart.'

The Archdeacon fidgeted in his chair; he did not altogether agree with this estimate of Arnold, yet he did not want to say so before an outsider. And just then the church bell rang, which put an end to the conversation. The doctor and the Archdeacon walked down to church together.

'I fancy Americans would get on my nerves, if I saw much of them. . . . A fine character, but utterly undisciplined, and, of course, one

doesn't expect sound doctrinal teaching in that quarter.'

'I don't know,' said the doctor. 'She's one of those who must work things out for themselves, and will never be satisfied with anything less than the truth. . . . They have to suffer a lot, but they go further than most of us.'

'Who's Beckford?' asked Miss Adams, walking sedately with Sister Katharine, in the rear of the long string of school-children.

'Oh, that's Chapenga's Mzungu, the one who rescued him from the slavers and afterwards sent him here. He's at the Company's station, up at Karonga's.'

'Oh!—a trader. But they're awful bad lots, surely?'

'Dr. Bassett thinks very highly of Mr. Beckford. So does Mr. Worthington—in fact, they are great friends.'

'Then why isn't he a missionary?' asked Miss Adams incisively.

But they had reached the church-door, so that Sister Katharine was not forced to attempt the solution of this problem.

X

CHISIMULU was a distinct relief to Beckford's mind. He had, as he said to Torrance, felt a kind of responsibility for the little waif thrown on his hands ; but the more he saw of his charge, the clearer it became to him that he, Beckford, was not equal to such a task ; also that, unless somebody who was equal took the boy in hand, he would speedily become an unmitigated and immitigable nuisance. So when he heard from Worthington that Chapenga was getting over the results of his accident as well as could be expected, and, further, behaving admirably and winning golden opinions (Beckford heaved a sigh out of the depths of his sad experience), besides expressing a great desire to go to school and learn with the other boys, he wrote back and said he should be happy to pay Chapenga's

board for a year or two (I think it amounted to two pounds per annum) if the mission would kindly try their hand on him. He added at the end of his letter : ' P.S. I'm afraid it's too good to last.'

It was. The Archdeacon, when he first heard of Chapenga's previous reputation, couldn't make it out. ' So gentle and attractive a child '—such was his impression of the boy who had defied Saidi from the housetop and horrified Worthington by his frank enjoyment of Saidi's prospects in the other world—' must have met with radically wrong treatment if he showed himself refractory ;' and he glared at poor Worthington (meaning nothing personal, but Worthington happened to be opposite him) as if he had been the uncle of the Babes in the Wood. The Archdeacon (who had never been to the North End, and had never met either Torrance or Beckford) had a rooted objection to all traders, a designation which included all the Company's employés, as persons who sold the native gin when they got the chance, and generally did their best to make him as bad as bad could be.

Worthington, who stood in considerable awe of the Archdeacon, feebly objected that the treatment of boys at Mlozi's camp was not likely to be other than radically wrong, but knew this was not really to the point, and was deeply grateful when the doctor put in a good word for Beckford.

But one afternoon the Archdeacon, having a spare half-hour before dinner, sauntered out, with 'In Memoriam' in his pocket, to enjoy a little quiet, and, passing under the trees between the printing-office and the store, saw Chapenga preaching from a pulpit improvised out of packing-cases which the boys had borrowed (without asking) from the store veranda. The Archdeacon was angry, naturally, but the matter presented itself to him in more lights than one.

'Do I really look like that?' he said to himself. 'I must ask the doctor if I screw up my eyes, and stick my head on one side, and bang the front of the pulpit like that.'

The boys spied him approaching—as they thought, before he had seen them—and by the time he had reached the spot where they were

playing Chapenga was out of his pulpit and on the ground going through a variety of prostrations and gesticulations with lightning rapidity.

‘What are you doing, Chapenga?’ asked the Archdeacon, in a tone of mild surprise. He had succeeded in putting aside his annoyance—at least, the outward signs of it.

Chapenga rose to his feet, saluting, as all the school-boys were taught to do.

‘He is showing us how the Anasala say their prayers,’ chorussed an admiring circle.

‘You ought not to do that,’ said the Archdeacon. ‘The Anasala do not know the right way to pray; still, we must not laugh at them when they try to do it!’

‘They pray to Satan!’ said Chapenga, unabashed and triumphant.

‘Oh no, they don’t,’ said the Archdeacon. He was not deeply read in Mohammedan theology, but he could not allow such an aspersion to pass unchallenged. ‘They pray to the same God as we do; only they do not know——’

He was not prepared with a homily on

the subject, and, pausing to think how he could best explain himself, caused Chapenga to think he had finished, and to exclaim jubilantly :

‘They say *we* do!’ as if that settled the matter.

The Archdeacon walked slowly away, reflecting that Chapenga was a harder nut to crack than he had imagined.

Chapenga’s doings at school, phenomenal at first, became less satisfactory as time went on. He had already, as we have seen, made fairly good progress in reading and writing. Thus, he was ahead of most lads of his own age, and it was difficult to place him, for in some ways the class-work was too easy for him, in others he was not well enough grounded to keep up. And after three or four weeks the novelty wore off, the routine wearied him, and he displayed no energy, except in mischief. He defied the native teachers, and openly made game of Worthington. The singing-class twice a week, which the energetic Miss Adams volunteered to undertake during her stay, by way of carrying out the principle that change of work is the

truest rest, was a great success. He felt that he distinguished himself there, and was on his best behaviour, accordingly, insomuch that both Miss Adams and Sister Katharine—who had taken her patient into her heart far too completely to eject him at short notice—cherished secret visions of Chapenga singing in the choir in a white surplice. But, alas! between Chapenga and that surplice a great gulf yawned, and no one, save those two sanguine ladies, expected to see him cross it.

Chapenga went from bad to worse. Miss Carver had a tame parrot—a local green parrot, which, fortunately for itself, was not an accomplished speaker. Chapenga tried hard, but without success, to teach it the worst possible language in Swahili. He discovered that Sister Emily was tender-hearted over dumb animals to the verge of sentimentality, and nearly drove her to distraction by pretending that he was about to roast birds alive or commit other atrocities, assertions which, let us hasten to add, had little or no foundation in fact. He terrified the boys of the junior dormitory nearly into fits, though he himself was, on occasion, horribly afraid of

*afiti** and other bogies, by dressing a bundle of grass in his shirt and calico and setting it up outside the door, just after they had gone to bed. Of course, he left the door ajar, only slightly supported (it opened outwards, and would not stay shut unless securely fastened), so that in a little while it opened uncannily of itself and revealed the *Thing*. . . . The doctor and Worthington heard the noise, came down to see what was the matter, and, hauling Chapenga forth, debated whether to lock him up for the rest of the night in the surgery or in the place under the veranda where boxes were kept, deciding finally in favour of the latter, as there was nothing in it he could either injure or be injured by.

Miss Adams had, before this last catastrophe, returned to her own sphere of labour, and Worthington, whose function it usually was to train the choir, continued the singing-classes. It may perhaps be gathered, from what has already been said, that the Reverend Cyril Worthington did not possess the knack of keeping order.

* Wizards who go about at night in all sorts of shapes.

The class consisted of some thirty boys, some of whom, try as he might, were sure, in the course of the lesson, to take up invisible positions behind his back, and there incite the others to ribaldry. And of these, it is needless to say that Chapenga was always first and foremost. Worthington would spin round and dodge from side to side, but could never catch them. He would repeatedly order them to form in line, two deep, behind the harmonium, and facing him ; but no sooner had they done so than they scattered again, as if they had been quicksilver, and the unfortunate teacher finally cast dignity and discipline to the winds by getting up and chasing them about the room. Finally he got most of them into a corner, and there a parley ensued ; they promising that they would return to their places if he would resume his seat and not try to catch them. And so, after a fashion, the lesson went on.

Once Worthington had a happy thought, and brought his shaving-glass from his bedroom down to school, hoping by this means to keep all the delinquents in sight. But the glass



refused to balance conveniently on the harmonium, and was too small to be of much use, and created so much excitement and disturbance that the lesson was ten times worse than any that had gone before. The boys at once began clamouring for the new and highly-fascinating object ; and Worthington, hoping thereby to get a little hold over them, weakly gave in, and allowed it to be handed round. In the midst of this scene, in walked the Archdeacon.

‘ Is this the singing - lesson ? ’ he asked freezingly, and walked away, apparently under the impression that Worthington had brought the glass down simply to amuse himself and the boys.

Then Chapenga fell into serious, and this time, I think, not altogether merited, trouble. Somebody said he had been teaching the little boys the same lesson, only rather worse, which he had endeavoured, without success, to inculcate on Miss Carver's parrot.

There may have been some misunderstanding about this. Worthington always thought the charge had not been fully proved, and that the matter was not so bad as it looked ; but,

then, he could only give his impressions, and Theophilus Chikadza was supposed to be relating facts. The Archdeacon thought a great deal of Theophilus Chikadza, who was in training for a catechist, and considered a very good boy. Worthington was not altogether sure that he trusted Theophilus, and he knew that Theophilus did not like Chapenga, and reflected that even an honest man's recollections of what he has seen and heard are sometimes unconsciously coloured by his likes and dislikes.

Chapenga was henceforth under a cloud. He was no longer allowed to sleep in the dormitory with the rest, but assigned a place in the hut which Theophilus shared with two other grown-up boys. And—it is very sad, and I cannot give the reason why—but words would fail to express the degree to which Chapenga detested Theophilus. The boys were warned against him, and—well, Chapenga found himself gently and gradually being sent to Coventry.

The doctor was away when this happened. He had gone up the lake with the steamer.

The Archdeacon conducted the investigation, and—again I do not pretend to explain it—being judicially questioned by the Archdeacon (whom yet, in a way, he respected, and also vaguely dreaded, as a kind of superior, far-off power not apt to come much in contact with boys like him) seemed to rouse the worst side of Chapenga's nature. There was a shade of insolence in his manner which was particularly exasperating, and perhaps it was this that deepened in the Archdeacon's mind the conviction that the boy was a thoroughly hardened character. He was doing the others more harm than he could possibly be receiving good. He must talk it over with the doctor ; but, for his part, he was inclined to think that the sooner they wrote and told Beckford they could no longer house his black sheep for him, the better.

Sister Katharine pleaded for him, and, in a way, became surety for his good behaviour. She tried to see more of him than she had done of late, and Chapenga when with her became a little less of the defiant rebel ; but the improvement was not permanent. He was

growing reckless. There had been a new accession of Yao boys to the boarders. They kept rather aloof from the rest, but fraternized with Peter, and heard from him all he knew of Chapenga's biography, which they embellished and commented on in their own fashion. They taunted him with being a slave, with having no father or mother, no village ; they called him a poverty-stricken Angoni, eater of locusts, a Tonga, a Henga—in short, a member (coupled with some insulting qualification) of every tribe but their own.

Chapenga, who usually had it all his own way in word contests, had never dreaded other boys' tongues before. In the ordinary course of things, he would have headed a faction of his own and defied the rest ; but now, whatever may have been the reason, the boys failed to rally round him. He began to feel himself alone as he had never yet done. The Archdeacon, believing him to be a case for wholesome severity, came down upon him sharply and often ; and that little dark man with the fiery eyes could be sharp, too ! But it was a somewhat indiscriminate sharpness,

and left a rankling sense of injustice, which was, somehow, subtly different from his wildest resentment against Saidi. He lost the bright insolence which had rendered him so captivating to some people (to Worthington, among others, in spite of what Worthington considered his better self), and was fast becoming a commonplace, sullen, naughty boy—even, on occasion, a spiteful one. He was rather ostentatious about this latest development, as when he, in Sister Katharine's presence, threw a stone at blind old Chasika, who used to sit in the sun outside the girls' house, and met her remonstrances with admirably-acted indifference and 'Pa li be kantu';* after which he went away into a lonely place and was miserable, for by this time he had a rudimentary, misshapen little conscience somewhere about him—just enough, as Mark Twain says, to make him unhappy; and Sister Katharine's good opinion meant a great deal to him—so did Beckford's; though it does not seem, at this stage, to have entered his head that he could do anything to deserve either.

* It is no matter.

Sister Katharine did not think it necessary to report him, since Chasika had not been hit. She knew that the boy had had one caning already that week—in the belief that strong measures were a necessity—and she did not believe that a second would do him any good. Nor did she say much to him, seeing from that ‘Pa li be kantu’ how the land lay, and that he was aiming at an exhibition of grieved surprise. Sister Emily would have gratified him to the full ; Sister Katharine simply walked away and thought the more.

Matters were still very much in this state when Chapenga strolled down to the landing-place one afternoon in March, not the jetty where the *Saint Columba* landed her passengers, but a little pebbly beach, just out of sight of the mission buildings, where canoes from the mainland sometimes ran in. He was not in good spirits ; in fact, as he would himself have said, his heart was sore. He had been kept in after afternoon school for a disturbance, in which, to do him justice, he had not had the only, or even the principal, share ; and not only kept in, but locked up in a cupboard, which



was Worthington's *ultima ratio*. He thought with bitter regret of the life at Karonga's—the dusty, untidy compound, with its dogs and goats and ducks and fowls and boys, and crowds of noisy, chaffering Wankonde and Awanda; the coming and going of *ulendos*; and Torrance and Gyp, and even Maclachlan—whose many shortcomings were shrouded in a tender haze of memory; and, above all, Beckford. He would rather have his ears boxed by Beckford than be lectured by the Mzungu Wamkulu of this place—him of the long black robe and the piercing eyes—or be locked in cupboards by Worthington, who might have his good points, but whom no self-respecting boy could look on as a being to be obeyed. He began to consider the possibility of running away. If a steamer were to come now, and he could hide on board her!

There were some people sitting round a fire on the beach. They had come over from the mainland with *malonda*—pumpkins, and green maize—and were waiting for the rest of the party, who had gone up to the mission to sell their goods. Chapenga joined them, and was

hospitably offered a roast maize-cob, just off the fire, which he accepted with alacrity, not only from politeness, but because he was really hungry. He had not chosen, on account of his 'sore heart,' to show himself at 'school food,' though quite aware that the meal was not yet over when he was released from durance, and that he might have received his portion after explanations made in the proper quarter.

But hunger, as we have seen, was no new thing to Chapenga, and it was not the first time of late that the hurt heart had constrained him to depend for sustenance on such casual snacks as might fall in his way. He had already some acquaintances among these simple villagers, who looked on the Chisimulu school-boys with great respect—much greater, indeed, than the little wretches deserved—and felt quite flattered by his coming to chat with them. In the course of gossip he learned that there had been for some time past a great brewing of beer at their village on the mainland, which beer was to be drunk that night at a dance in honour of somebody's funeral, or, rather, as the

closing ceremony of mourning for a death that had taken place some time before.

An idea struck Chapenga. He waited till the women had arrived, loaded with beads and calico, and had stowed away their baskets in the canoes, and, further, till nearly all the canoes were launched; and then he casually dropped the information that he wouldn't mind coming to that dance. The women giggled and the men chuckled, or, in fact, crowed, as if this were an exceedingly good joke; and old Mambala, the patriarch of the settlement, slapped Chapenga on the back, and rocked himself to and fro, bubbling over with mirth.

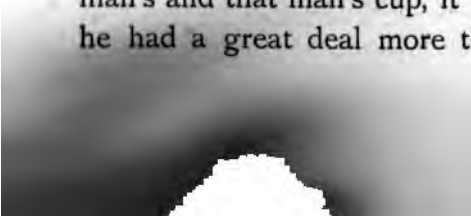
'He wants to come and drink beer!' he said. 'He wants to come and play with us, the Anyanja! There is room for him in thy canoe, Manyoka. Get in, boy! He wants to play with the Anyanja!'

And the old gentleman subsided into the bottom of the craft, heaving convulsively.

Most natives of Africa are easily amused. It is a good quality, and one they are very ready to appreciate in other people.

XI

CHAPENGA went to the dance at Mambala's ; in fact, he spent the night there, for they kept it up till the sun was well above the horizon. It is not to be understood that he danced himself, though, as we have seen, his accomplishments in that line were not to be despised ; his share in that part of the performance consisted chiefly in sitting on his heels, and joining in the hand-clapping wherewith most of the company kept time to the thumping of the drums, while the dancers marched and counter-marched and jigged backwards and forwards, and 'marked time' in the midst. As for the beer, that was no novelty to him ; and he partook freely. Between small gourds generously filled for him from time to time, and stray sips from this man's and that man's cup, it is safe to say that he had a great deal more than was good for



him ; and the ultimate effect (after several months of enforced abstinence) was other than he had bargained for.

The drums were still thumping when the bell of St. Aidan's came with a far-off, silvery tinkle across the waters next morning. Chapenga heard it, and it suggested a faint recollection of some strange and distant state of things, but no thought of church, or school, or return to the island. He was very sleepy, and his head ached fit to split, and a little while after—just when the choir were beginning to intone the Psalms—he slipped away from the circle, stumbled into the nearest hut, curled himself alongside what seemed to be a heap of dogs and small children, and soon forgot alike last night's dissipation and yesterday's misery.

Theophilus noticed, on retiring, that Chapenga was not in the hut, but concluded, with easy-going philosophy, that he must have gone to sleep somewhere else, and troubled his head no further. When the boy's absence was noticed at matins and morning school, Theophilus was called up and questioned, and sent posting all over the island in search of Chapenga. He

was nowhere to be found, and Theophilus had become very hot and tired and cross by the time he fell in with an old woman, who remembered to have seen a boy in a white shirt going away in a canoe with Mambala's people, who had come over with *malonda*. Theophilus went and reported that Chapenga had run away to Mambala's on the mainland, and with difficulty refrained from adding that, in his opinion, it was a good riddance. To his no small disgust, he found himself deputed to accompany Worthington to Mambala's, bring back Chapenga, and cite the old man to answer for his conduct in thus leading the mission youth astray.

Chapenga was found without difficulty. Had Theophilus gone alone, it is possible that Mambala's people would have denied all knowledge of him; but Worthington's presence impressed them: there was a general buzz of inquiry, a running about and rummaging under mats and between the supports of *nkokwes*, and finally Chapenga, blinking and confused, was dragged forth to daylight. Old Mambala accompanied the party back to Chisimulu. He

said he had indeed given Chapenga some beer, but only a little. 'No more than that,' indicating with his fingers the contents of an imaginary cup. He did not know that the great Mzungu did not wish the school-boys to drink beer or to attend festivities without leave. Doubtless Chapenga had done wrong in not asking leave. He, Mambala, was exceedingly sorry for what had occurred, and would remember for the future never to bestow *moa* on mission boys. He would report them if they asked for it. And so, with profuse apologies and promises, Mambala took his departure, carrying with him a fathom of calico as solatium for his trouble in making the trip.

Chapenga was left to meditate on his transgressions in the doctor's veranda-room, where he sat among the boxes, like a sick pelican in the wilderness, feeling dazed, headachy and ill-used, and finally went to sleep.

When he awoke, somewhat restored, he could see by the light that it was evening, and Peter was peeping in through the wooden bars of the door. Peter, though he had been deeply impressed by warnings of Chapenga's wicked-

ness, and had dutifully obeyed the injunction not to associate with him, cherished a certain affection for him. It may have been merely the effect of habit, or it may have been the tenderness with which we are apt to regard those whom we have pommelled in fair fight. Anyhow, Peter could not adjust himself quickly to new relations, or pull up the old ones by the roots (an enviable facility possessed by some people) the moment they became inconvenient. He had never, though he had, in a sense, caused it, really joined in his compatriots' persecution of Chapenga, and, now that the latter was in real, tangible trouble, Peter was seized with the idea that he would like to console him. He stood for some time outside the door in silence; then he called softly. There was no answer.

'Chapenga, do you want some food?'

'No,' said Chapenga.

'I have saved some *nsima* for you.'

No answer.

'I have got some *matongwe*.'

Chapenga did not respond to this seductive offer. A *litongwe* is a round fruit with a hard

shell, about the size of a cricket-ball, and containing a great many seeds, a very little pulp, and a moderate amount of juice, with a peculiar taste—bitter, acid, and sweetish all at once, and not particularly grateful to the uninitiated European palate. But Chapenga's whole soul longed for *matongwe*, only he would not say so.

Perhaps Peter guessed the state of things, for, without more ado, he tried to push his treasures between the bars. They were too big, however. Not one of them would pass. Chapenga must have been watching more closely than he would have cared to acknowledge, for at this juncture he ejaculated '*Pansi!*' and Peter, looking down, perceived that the ground was uneven, and that the door in some places did not meet it by a good six inches. So he rolled the *matongwe* in, one by one, and Chapenga, though he did not thank Peter, picked them up eagerly.

'Do you want anything else?' asked Peter, after watching him crack a *litongwe* against the ground and consume it with leisurely enjoyment.

'I want a pencil and a piece of paper,' said Chapenga.

Peter stood for a while with his mouth open.

'Do you want to write a letter?'

Chapenga did not condescend to enlighten him, but repeated his demand. Peter had a stump of pencil among his treasures. He went and fetched it, and, having begged a piece of paper from Sister Katharine, returned to hand them to Chapenga just as the church bell was beginning to ring. Chapenga was thus left undisturbed by troublesome questions. He supported his paper against the side of a packing-case, sucked his pencil, and began :

'MY DEAR MR BEKFORD'

(So far in English; thenceforth we must translate, leaving the punctuation as we find it.)

'Why do you not come to take me away you said you would when I was well I do not like this place. You said the Donna would take care of me and she is good but the great Mzungu——'

This took some time to write, what with the failing light and a very so-so point to the pencil. He had got no further when Theophilus came to the door, bringing a platter of food and a jar of water, also Chapenga's own sleeping-mat and blanket.

'The Mzungu Wamkulu says you are to sleep here to-night,' said Theophilus. 'He will speak with you in the morning.'

Chapenga, once more left to himself, ate and drank, and then wrapped himself in his blanket, hoping at least to forget in sleep the thought of the impending interview. He did fall asleep for a while, but less soundly than usual, and awoke in about two hours' time to find the moonlight streaming into his prison. It was all very still, and queer, and uncanny, and Chapenga, who had never been alone at night since the time when he ran away from Swali, did not like it. Everyone, apparently, was in bed and asleep. He would have been glad enough to follow their example, but was quite abnormally restless, no doubt through the violent disturbance which his balance of night and day had undergone. He remembered the

letter which the darkness had not allowed him to finish. The moonlight was quite bright enough to see.

He felt for his paper and pencil, got up, and went to the door, and then a thought struck him which made him forget all about the letter. (It was picked up some days after, and fell into Worthington's hands, to whom we owe its preservation.) The door, as already implied, was not a solid affair—only a piece of paling, as it were, fitted to the arched opening (so that there could be no climbing over it), and sawn off straight at the bottom. Chapenga remembered how Peter had rolled in the *matongwe* through the space in the middle, where the passing of feet and the dragging in and out of boxes had worn away the soil. Surely, with a little squeezing, a slight and active boy could wriggle under the gate? Chapenga had off his shirt and *tewera* in a twinkling, and was presently flat on the ground, squirming and writhing, more like some large brown slug than a vertebrate creature. With all his suppleness, however, he found the opening too small. He looked round, saw a loose bit of iron



band sticking up from the side of a packing-case, wrenched it off—though it gave him a nasty cut—doubled it in two to stiffen it, and then went down on his knees and began to dig.

It was a long, worrying job, but it meant freedom, and, in the end, Beckford. He had it all clear in his mind. He would hide somewhere on the further side of the island, and wait till he saw some mainland canoes starting on their return journey—not Mambala's, whose people would refuse to take him, but some from a more distant place. Then—but he must find his canoe first. He worked away with fiery energy, till the perspiration poured off him in streams, and he was forced to stop and take breath, and why he did not, while so doing, catch a chill violent enough to have ended him within the next three weeks is one of the many mysteries which this narrative must leave unexplained. Perhaps it was a certain likeness to Carlyle's Ram Dass, in the matter of internal fire, which saved him.

It was done at last. Chapenga, on making

trial, found that the upper half of him would pass without very much scraping ; so he slipped back again, folded up his shirt (with Peter's pencil in the breast pocket) and his waist-calico, with the broad red stripe down one end, and the number (67) conspicuously marked in red in one corner. Chapenga was not going to be No. 67 any longer.

He folded his blanket also, laid it and the other two articles in a neat pile on his mat, and took to himself his own private possessions : a much-washed, though not particularly clean, strip of calico he had had with him when he came, and an old goatskin, a present from a friendly villager, which served him in the cold weather as an extra covering at night. Theophilus had caught it up along with the mat, when he brought it to him.

He pushed the things under the gate, and followed without any serious dislocation, rose to his feet, twisted the calico tightly round him, tucking in the ends as men do when preparing for a heavy piece of work, put the goatskin over his shoulders, and stood still a minute reflecting. The cherished biscuit tin, which (once weeded

of all unlawful contents) Beckford had willingly received into his guardianship, and which had subsequently travelled in safety to Chisimulu, was reposing in Theophilus's hut. Nine boys out of ten would have gone back for it, and might have done so successfully, seeing that Theophilus and his two companions slept like—well, like most natives, and you could scarcely have roused them by burning the house down over their heads. But Chapenga was the tenth boy ; and, hard as it was to part from his treasures—the clasp-knife, for instance—he was able to take the risks into account. Theophilus might sleep like twenty-one Ephesians, but the Archdeacon might be making a midnight perambulation, as he sometimes did, being nervous about fire ; Worthington might be kept awake by malarial neuralgia ; or half a dozen other things might take place, weighing which in his mind Chapenga came to the conclusion that the tin box was not worth liberty—and Beckford.

So the bats, and whatever birds may haunt Chisimulu by night, were no doubt puzzled by the sight of a small and very uncivilized figure

pattering alone through the maize and pumpkin-plots, to the further side of the island. Arrived there, Chapenga wrapped himself in his goat-skin, and curled himself up under a big rock on the shore to wait for day.

XII

It was still dark when Chapenga woke, but the birds had begun to twitter in the long grass and sedges, and the sky was whitening with the dawn. He was cold and stiff, and the mosquitoes had stung him badly, and the prospect was not a cheerful one, looked at from any point of view whatsoever; but he never thought of going back as he squatted with his chin on his knees, and watched the light slowly brightening. When day came search would be made for him, and, the island being limited in space and wanting in cover, he must be found. No canoes would be available for hours to come. It was a situation where genius itself was of no avail, without some fortunate conjunction of circumstances.

As the light grew he looked about him for hiding-places. There was none close by, but a

little way off was an inlet where the water was shallow and the bank fringed with tall reeds. It was not likely they would begin to search just yet ; but people would be coming out to work in their gardens, and it would be advisable to take to cover before the sun was up. In the meantime he walked about on solid ground to warm himself, and soon perceived a clump of reeds forming a little island, perhaps a dozen yards from the bank.

The morning bugle blew, and Chapenga bethought himself that he was hungry as well as cold. He went back cautiously to the nearest of the gardens he had passed through in the night, and, seeing no one about, snatched a few cobs of green corn, and hurried back to the shore, where he began nibbling one, and secured the rest in his calico. Then he doubled up his goatskin, fastened it together with a twist of grass, put it on his head, and waded into the water.

He found it deeper than he expected, in one place nearly up to his neck, and of course it was horribly cold. Whether there were any crocodiles about I don't know ; Chapenga

(who, as we have seen, could remember their presence when it suited him) either never thought of this, or he considered the game quite worth the candle. And, any way, the crocodiles are never so dangerous in the clear waters of the lake as in the muddy Shiré. He reached his little island in safety, and, getting round to the side furthest from the shore, bent down the pliant bango-stalks, spread his goat-skin on them, and made himself a little nest, where he was completely hidden. There he sat and ate green maize, and heard the church bell ring for matins, and wondered whether Theophilus had been looking for him, and, if so, where. He also thought, with a pang, of the abandoned tin box. Theophilus would probably appropriate its treasures, and say nothing about them.

The school bell rang, and Chapenga pictured Worthington calling over the names, and peering through his spectacles to discover the whereabouts of the boy who did not answer. And time went on, and the sun climbed higher, and still there were no voices from the land, no shouts of 'Chapenga! Cha-pe-e-e-nga!' I

will not go so far as to say that Chapenga was not a little disappointed.

The maize was all eaten, and he was beginning to feel dull. If it had lasted much longer he would probably have made his way ashore again, and walked into Theophilus' arms from sheer ennui; but just as he was beginning to arrive, in a vague and inarticulate way, at this conclusion, he saw something interesting.

A black, moving thing appeared round the northern end of the island, then another, and then a third. They were fishing-canoes returning to the mainland.

Chapenga sprang up, waved his goatskin, and shouted with all his might. His voice was not very powerful, and, with all his exertions, died down into a ridiculous little pipe, utterly disproportioned to the distance it was meant to bridge; but it must have reached the fishermen, or else they saw something very unusual in the clump of reeds, for they stopped paddling, and seemed to be looking intently at it. Chapenga rolled up his calico (now dry again) along with the precious goat-

skin, put the bundle on his head, plunged into the water, and struck out boldly. When the crew of the last canoe saw him swimming, they paddled in his direction, and were not long in reaching him, and half a dozen pairs of arms were stretched out to help him over the gunwale.

He was thrust down into the bottom of the cranky craft, and patted, and questioned, and rubbed down, and given *moa* to drink and snuff to clear his wits ; and by the time he was able to tell his story connectedly, he had a very pretty one arranged.

These people were from somewhere near Mbota's, on the eastern shore, but a long way from Mambala's. They had been out fishing all yesterday and had spent the night on the little rocky island of Chikala. Chapenga, who, we know, was accustomed to keep his eyes and ears open, ascertained these and a few other points in time to shape his narrative thereby. He was a stranger from a distance, he said, visiting friends near Chibwana, and had gone with them on a long fishing expedition. On the eastern side of Chisimulu the canoe had been

overtaken by a sudden squall and capsized ; her crew, Chapenga believed, had been drowned ; at any rate, he had not seen them again, and had escaped by swimming to the place where they had found him.

His heart was sore for his friends (Chapenga experienced a certain artistic enjoyment in working up the tragedy), and now he would have to go and tell the news to the survivors before he went home. Would the fishermen give him a passage to the mainland ? The kindly fellows were heartily willing, and offered no comments on the story, only one of them asked why he had not sought help on the island. He answered that, being a stranger, he had not known that there were any people there. On its being explained that it was not only inhabited, but contained white people, Chapenga fell into a great perturbation, and said that he had never seen a white man in his life ; he understood that they were terrible creatures who ate boys. This filled the fishermen with a sense of superior enlightenment, and they instructed Chapenga in the manners and customs of white men to a degree which must have

sorely taxed his self-command. They fed him and were otherwise kind to him, and the expedition reached port without further mischance, at Mbota's village.

There was a beer-drinking going on there, and Chapenga readily accepted the invitation of his new friends to stay and refresh himself for a day or two before proceeding to seek out the mourners. The delay would give him a chance of escaping unwelcome offers of an escort ; and there was no risk in attending this festivity, which was many miles away from Mambala's.

So Chapenga stayed and enjoyed himself, and yet something, possibly the rudimentary traces of a conscience, prevented his doing so completely. There was also another fly in his ointment—if we may express ourselves so impolitely—in the shape of a chance guest of the headman : an old lady in the witch-doctoring line, who seemed to take a fancy to him, and made him decidedly uncomfortable.

I say 'witch-doctoring' because many, if not most, diseases are caused by witchcraft, and need a knowledge of the occult arts to treat

182 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

them successfully, especially in cases where it is essential to discover the person who has laid the spell. But, as a matter of fact, Tifantiona's strength lay chiefly in herbs, and she preferred relying on them, though occasionally called in to do a little divining, in a matter of lost property or the like. She had a great reputation as a prophetess, but was not of much practical use in this direction, for she never could be depended on for predictions. Nine times out of ten she would declare to the people who consulted her that she could tell them nothing; while, on the other hand, she might at any time, when the fit took her, utter the most astounding things, enough to make your hair turn gray, without being asked at all.

She was a tall, muscular old woman, with an aquiline nose and a wonderfully bright eye; her teeth were still perfect, and her short white wool quite thick on her head. She wore a sheet of brown bark-cloth wrapped about her, and all sorts of things round her neck—seeds and claws and shells—and her hair was adorned with another assortment of queer objects, the most conspicuous being a small bladder, taken

from the body of the goat killed in her honour a few days before. Her home was understood to be at some village in the hills ; but she was mostly on the tramp, searching for medicines in the Bush or visiting patients here, there, and everywhere.

She had been treating the headman's mother for an attack of some sort, and, the cure being successfully accomplished, the gratitude of the patient and her family was unbounded, and the practitioner might have had ten times as much beer (not to mention other things) as was good for her, had she been so minded. But she ate and drank remarkably little at any time, and did not care to mingle with the revellers, but mostly kept out of sight or sat silent apart.

It was the evening of the second day after Chapenga's arrival. He was one of a merry circle round a big calabash, thoroughly enjoying himself for the moment. The grown-up men treated him quite as one of themselves, and listened open-mouthed to his stories, and he laughed and talked and felt himself a person of importance, when suddenly he became aware



of an uneasy feeling down his back, as if someone were looking at him. He turned round. There was no one in sight but old Tifantiona, sitting about twenty-five yards away in the shadow of a *nkokwe*.

Chapenga tried to keep up his share in the conversation, but he became restless and *distrail*; he could not remember what he wanted to say, or attend to what the others were saying. Some force was on him, so that he had to look round again. And presently, without knowing why, he felt he could not sit still. He got up and left the group in the midst of a particularly noisy burst of laughter, and then—well, three minutes later he was squatting on his heels before Tifantiona, and looking at her very much as a bird may be supposed to look at a serpent (not that I ever saw one in the act of being fascinated)—that is, as if he would have preferred to be anywhere else.

Tifantiona was looking straight at him, and yet she scarcely seemed to see him. It was to Chapenga's horrified consciousness as if she could see right through him. He thought of Torrance, and decided that even his eyes were

not as bad as this. She sat like a statue for some time, and then she said :

‘ Chapenga !’

Chapenga jumped, and began to utter a howl, and would have liked to run away or throw himself down and hide his face on the ground, but he could not. He could not even finish the howl, which stuck in his throat. No one knew his name. When he arrived he had simply given the first which came into his head —Nsomba (the Fish).

‘ You told the fishermen a lie,’ she went on in dreamy, dispassionate tones. ‘ You said you had come in a canoe from Chibwana’s, and had been wrecked, and your friends drowned. But you had run away from the white men’s house in Chisimulu. Why did you say what is not true ?’

Chapenga did not see what answer he could make to this, so made none.

‘ You were afraid that the people would send you back to the house of the white men. Why did you run away ?’

Chapenga had found his tongue by this time, and replied humbly, in a very small voice :

'Because they treated me badly. Theophilus the teacher slandered me to the white men, saying I had done things which I had not done.'

'*Ko!*' ejaculated the old lady. 'So it is not true that you went to Mambala's village, the same being a forbidden thing, and there got drunk with *mas* ?'

Chapenga hung his head. He would not have had the least scruple in denying it, but he was afraid. Who could tell how much this terrible person knew?

'Speak, then,' she said slowly.

'It is true,' Chapenga admitted; and then, on further questioning, gave a tolerably correct account of all that had befallen him. Tifantiona listened in an abstracted sort of way, and when Chapenga had finished she frightened him worse than before, for, on looking up, he saw that her head was lying back against the platform of the *nkokwe* as if she had been asleep, but her eyes were wide open and her whole body rigid. He wanted to jump up and run away, but could not stir a finger. Whether he was hypnotized or only scared I will not pretend to decide.

It did not last long, however. In about five minutes Tifantiona seemed to wake up, jerked her head forward, and shut her mouth—which had remained slightly open—with a snap. She passed her hand across her eyes once or twice, looked about her, as if trying to remember where she was, and then remarked :

‘The white men’s ship is coming. I heard it say *te, te, te!* In three days it will stop at Marenga’s, and they will buy wood. Marenga’s people have been cutting wood in the hills against their coming.’

Chapenga was interested, in spite of the shivers which ran down his back. He knew enough of the requirements of steamers to follow the connection, and the very thought seemed to bring him near to Beckford.

‘To-morrow I go to seek medicine in the hills. I want a boy to carry the basket. Next day I want to go to Lumbalo’s, which is but a day’s journey from Marenga’s. There will be people returning to the shore with wood. You can go down with them.’

Chapenga did not view this prospect with unmixed enjoyment. Tifantiona was no doubt

188 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

an eminent person in her own walk of life, but he would have preferred to admire her from a distance. On the other hand, he scarcely cared to face the lonely hills inland all by himself; and if he attempted to travel along the lake shore, he would have to pass by Mambala's—not to mention the possibility of falling in with parties of hostile Yaos or Magwangwara. And Tifantiona's presence, dangerous as she might be in herself, was, at any rate, a guarantee against other dangers. Besides, it would have required more courage than he possessed to say no. So he agreed, and the old lady told him she wished to start at dawn next morning.

XIII

CHAPENGA was fast asleep and very comfortable when the old woman shook him by the shoulder. It was not pleasant to turn out in the chilly starlight, but he knew better than to object, thinking it quite possible that a worse thing might befall him. Whether Tifantiona had said 'Good-bye' overnight I do not know. Very probably she had not, but the villagers were accustomed to accept her comings and goings as a matter of course, and did not expect her to stand upon the order of them.

She gave Chapenga a basket to carry on his head, and herself took up another, besides which she had a plaited palm-leaf bag slung round her neck, and a long staff in her hand. Between them they unbarred the door in the fence surrounding the huts and passed out, Tifantiona leading the way along the narrow winding path

between the maize and pumpkin patches. Here, in this bit of fertile bottom-land, the maize was high above her head (and she must have stood a good six feet), and, the dew being heavy on the leaves, Chapenga came in for a sort of shower-bath, which he found so unpleasant that he forgot to be grateful for the modified form in which it reached him owing to Tifantiona's walking first. By the time the sun rose they had left the cultivated ground behind, and were making their way up a narrow track beside the bed of a small stream which made its way down a narrow gorge, in whose bottom great trees grew, and whose sides were curtained with tangled masses of vines. Every now and then Tifantiona turned aside, and grubbed up roots with a little pointed stick, or gathered leaves, or chipped off bits of bark with the knife which was slung round her neck, and stowed these things carefully away, each done up in a little packet.

By-and-by, when the banks of the stream became impassable, and the sides of the gorge not quite so steep, they came to a little path winding down from the top. Chapenga recog-

nised it as a track made by animals coming down to drink, and he did not like it, for the ground was soft enough in places to show the footmarks of these animals quite clearly, and he saw not only pairs of tiny indentations made by the klipspringer (an animal which walks on the points of its toe-nails), and the traces left by the slender hoofs of the bush-buck, but broad prints like those of very big cat's paws, and others which might have belonged to an exaggerated dog. Of course, he knew that the owners of these feet were not likely to be about by daylight; still, it was gloomy down there in the ravine, and you never could tell, especially if the old lady, whose power over the brutes might be a protection, chose to manifest it by setting them on him. However, it was no use saying anything. He lagged behind just long enough to fortify himself with a drink at the stream, and then followed his guide.

It was a long, stiff climb, and Chapenga was nearly melted by the time he came out into the sunshine at the top. The hillside was covered with open scrub, small trees, and grass, which was easy to walk through, though there

was no regular path after they had left the game-track. There was not much shade. Chapenga was growing both tired and hungry—he had exhausted the piece of *chinangwa* he had been nibbling at as he went along—and the sun was now overhead, and yet that energetic old lady never seemed to think of stopping. Chapenga's first awe had worn off a little, and present discomfort was stronger than prospective danger. He struck.

'I am tired,' he remarked abruptly, stopping dead in his tracks.

She turned round and looked at him as if she had never seen him before. Perhaps it had never occurred to her that a boy cannot walk on for ever with nothing to eat ; perhaps she had totally forgotten his presence till reminded of it. Anyhow, she contemplated him with interest, and made no objection when he threw himself down under the shadiest bush he could find. After staring in silence for a minute or two, she squatted on her heels opposite him, setting her basket down beside her.

Chapenga, seeing that nothing dreadful had

happened, waxed bolder, and said, coming straight to the point :

‘ I am hungry.’

Tifantiona gazed at him open-eyed, as at some curious and hitherto unobserved phenomenon, and said not a word. But she began to rummage in her basket, and presently produced some sweet-potatoes and a few inches of sugar-cane. Chapenga accepted them, not without misgivings when he saw where they came from ; for what other uncanny things might be in that basket who could tell ? But he was very hungry, so he ate them, and experienced no ill effects.

Tifantiona did not eat anything herself ; she only sat and stared stonily in front of her. She took no further notice of Chapenga, but muttered to herself now and then, and his flesh crept ; for he thought she must be talking to the spirits—as perhaps she was.

They went on again, after resting for an hour or two, and, striking a native path, walked in it without further incident till night fell—an occurrence which seemed to make no sort of difference to Tifantiona. She marched sturdily

on under the starlight—there was no moon—and the boy followed, quaking. He heard the snapping bark of the little *nkandwe* jackals, and the howling of various melancholy and apparently very hungry hyenas, and held his peace with an effort; but when he heard another sound—a deep, gruff *Hau ! hau !* that seemed to his excited imagination not so very far away, either—he thought it was time to repeat the tactics of the dinner-hour. So he said, in a small and lamentable voice :

‘I am afraid.’

Tifantiona stood still and collected her wits, which were probably wandering in some outlying corner of the material universe, if not in the spirit-world itself, with an evident effort.

‘What are you afraid of, child?’

‘The lion is roaring,’ rejoined Chapenga.

‘I am afraid he will eat me.’

She threw back her head and listened, now fully awake and alive to her surroundings.

‘There is no fear. He will not hurt you.’

‘Have you medicine to keep him away, mother?’ inquired Chapenga respectfully.

She laughed softly.

'I have many medicines. But the lion does not touch people when he is not hungry, and then only those who have done some evil. Do you not know that the lions are the spirits of our fathers?'

Chapenga was not aware of this interesting fact, but he did not venture to comment on it. He only modestly suggested the desirability of camping, and she was once more forced to recognise the limitations of the average boy. They made a fire and put up a little shelter of branches; Chapenga curled himself up in his old goatskin and was soon fast asleep.

He had a bad dream of some sort, and, waking long after midnight, saw the old woman putting sticks on the fire, and the waning moon hanging redly over the tree-tops. It felt so uncanny that he could not immediately go to sleep again, so lay still and watched her. She sat with her knees drawn up and her chin resting on them, and crooned a queer sort of chant into the fire. Chapenga caught some of the words.

'I cannot see them. All my life I have

sought to see them. They come and speak to me and are gone again ; and I have never seen them, and I cannot always hear their voices when I would. But I shall see them when I die—I, Tifantiona !'

Now, Tifantiona means 'We die and we shall see.'

Then she began to mutter unintelligibly again ; and then she fixed her eyes on Chapenga, so that he was in mortal terror lest she should address him, and pretended so vigorously to be asleep that in a very short space of time the pretence became a reality, and when he woke again the sun was shining on his face, and the old lady was packing her basket, and so far condescending to human necessities as to be chewing a root of some sort.

They went on their way, and nothing very special happened till in the evening they reached Lumbalo's village, where Tifantiona was warmly welcomed. Lumbalo himself was very ill with fever, and a woman had that morning met with a bad accident chopping wood, the axe having slipped and cut a deep gash in her foot. Tifantiona attended to this case first, tying up

the foot with a poultice of leaves ; and then she bustled the unlucky Chapenga about till his life would have been a burden to him if he had not, as we have seen, possessed the organizing faculty. As it was, he sent a couple of boys to gather sticks, and four women to fetch water, and then requisitioned a large earthen jar from some of the inhabitants. When the fire was made he sat over it, rubbing his hands, and superintended the boiling of the water with much dignity till called on again to pound certain leaves and throw them into the pot. Then he had to spread a mat beside the fire, and then the patient came out, supported by two of his brothers, and was made to sit on it ; and the doctor, with the assistance of these two, erected two or three more mats round him like a wall, and put another over the top of them. He was left to steam for some hours while his friends went to bed, and could be heard coughing and choking violently in the silence of the night. Tifantiona sat up with him, and (what, from his point of view, was more important) made Chapenga sit up too till the fire burnt low, when she released Lumbalo, wrapped a

blanket round him, and escorted him to his hut, allowing the unhappy youth to go to sleep at last.

Next morning he found that the wood-carriers were starting for the lake, and joined their party without asking permission or, I am sorry to say, troubling himself to take leave of Tifantiona. He was mortally afraid of being detained, and unspeakably glad to be free of his medical apprenticeship. I fear he would never have made a doctor.

No less glad was Captain Dewar to see the long procession winding across the grassy level by the lake shore. He was at his wits' end for wood, having exhausted the supplies on the spot, and nearly driven mad by perpetual assurances that 'People with *malonda*' would be coming in to-morrow. The Bandawe mails were already overdue ; and as for the state of mind Torrance would be in by the time his consignment of stores had reached Karonga's, it was better only guessing. Whereas here was an *ulendo* with wood enough to fill not only the remaining void in the bunkers, but all the available deck space.

And Chapenga found that nobody asked any questions when he lent a hand in piling it on deck, or noticed him hiding behind a stack in the confusion of starting. When the *Flamingo* was well under way, he came out and sat on the top of the deck-house, and told stories to the other boys, over whom he had asserted his authority at the outset to save trouble later on.

Thence he was hunted down first by Affonso, the Capitão, then by Captain Dewar, and then again by Mr. Wallace, the engineer, returning to his post with an energy and persistence which must have cost him more trouble than any amount of the work he was so anxious to escape. Finally he was captured and kept at work under close supervision in the stoke-hold. Still, on second thoughts he did not care. He was on his way to Karonga's, and stoking the engines for a white man (though that white man was not Beckford, nor anything remotely approaching him) was better than carrying the medicine-basket for an old witch-doctor.

I do not know why Tifantiona should have troubled herself at all about Chapenga, except out of pure good-nature, seeing she could per-

fectly well have carried her medicines herself, as had been her custom on previous occasions. If she helped him out of a fix in the expectation of gratitude (which, however, is improbable) she must have been sorely disappointed.

The present white men, Dewar and Wallace, were well enough in their way, Chapenga thought ; but, since they were not Beckford, he was determined that neither of them should get more work out of him than he chose, or, at any rate, than he could help. The consequence whereof was that Wallace vowed with much emphatic language that never had he seen a more slippery, ill-conditioned brat, and half Affonso's time was taken up with chasing him round the deck. Wallace had his hands too full with the engines, and the captain was too good-natured, to assault him personally, and there was plenty of rice going at the dinner-hour, and the boys were quite disposed to be impressed by Chapenga's personality, so that he had a pretty good time on the whole. Now and then he overheard the conversation between Dewar and Wallace, who had not the remotest notion that he could understand English, and,

listening eagerly for names he knew, was rewarded by not infrequent mention of Torrance, Beckford, Maclachlan, and 'that foreign chap Duvernier,' of whom it appeared there were rumours that he had fallen among Ruga-Ruga, and been killed and eaten.

'A canna juist think it's correct,' said Dewar. 'A'm thinkin' they'd find him a tough morsel.'

'Oh, he'll turn up again, never fear!' retorted the other, who had had experience of Duvernier in tight places. 'I'd like to see them try it;' and he laughed to himself at the notion, then added meditatively: 'He's not such a bad fellow, after all, if he weren't so—so foreign.'

'He gave me the last of his quinine when I was bad wi' the fever at Deep Bay. A doot a shouldna have pulled through but for him.' The captain spoke somewhat resentfully; he had in his mind some inarticulate protest against the injustice of condemning a foreigner for being foreign, but he could not put it into words. 'And there's more than one man on the lake can say the same. Torrance thinks a lot of him.'

'Oh, well, I'm not saying anything against

him, only I don't like it when a man can't say two words without getting excited, and throwing his arms about all over the place. Hallo! what are *you* doing this end of the boat? They were sitting at breakfast under the stern awning, and Chapenga had stowed himself in a corner near enough to catch what was being said. 'None but table-boys allowed here. Off you go, forward!'

Chapenga went, and heard as he was departing: 'That's that imp Nsomba; I'm sure he's up to no good. You may bet he was waiting for the chance of picking up something when the boys clear the table.' This turned the scale, and closed his heart against Wallace, whom, in a mad moment, he had thought of taking into his confidence and consulting about Beckford.

The day after this incident a bitter disappointment befell. The *Flamingo's* engine broke down, and it was decided to put back and run for Chisimulu, of all places. They were nearer Bandawe, but there was no landing-place there; so Captain Dewar sent on the Bandawe mails in the whale-boat towing astern. Cha-

penga's resolution was soon taken. Back to Chisimulu no one should take him alive. Bandawe was, at least, on the same side of the lake as Karonga's, and if no convenient vessel happened along to convey him, he thought (having no very clear idea of the distance) that he would walk it rather than not go at all. So he made himself very useful in loading the whale-boat, and slipped into her as a volunteer at the last minute, and neither the captain nor Wallace was inconsolable when they noticed that he was missing.

Chapenga knew that there was a mission-station at Bandawe, but (perhaps on the principle of 'Once bit, twice shy') he regarded it with extreme caution. He hung about, gossiped with the sweepers and other miscellaneous temporary workers about the place, now and then lent a hand with odd jobs, got here a meal and there a corner of a *masasa* to sleep in, and heard and saw many things, but never obtruded himself on the notice of any European. The doctor, strolling through the grounds in earnest conversation with a colleague, never suspected that the dusty, shock-headed little ragamuffin,

24 CHAPENGAY'S WHITE MAN

sweeping the path as he passed, understood nearly every word, and had, moreover, peeped into the church, and, figuratively speaking, turned up his nose at it because it had no gold cross, altar lights, or flowers, like the one at Chisimulu. Great as was his detestation of the latter place, he took up, on the strength of his residence there, a very critical attitude towards any which differed from it, and, in particular, thought the Bandawe harmonium a very inferior instrument to the *limba* on which Miss Adams had played to him.

In one way and another he contrived to pick up, in addition to what he knew before, the information that Torrance had for some time been absent on an expedition to Lake Mweru, leaving Beckford in charge, and that Mac-lachlan had been invalided to Cape Town. But he could hear of no vessel going northward—not even a canoe—and, having by this time discovered the land journey to be impracticable, was fain to wait.

He had been at Bandawe about six weeks, when a large sailing-boat was seen approaching from the northward. He soon recognised her



as the whale-boat from Karonga's; and disregarding the shouts of the grass-cutters, whom he had been assisting and now shamelessly deserted, he ran down to the beach and sat on a stone, waiting.

The boat came nearer, running before a light breeze, and Chapenga's sharp eyes soon made out figures on board her. There was a mat fixed up in the stern as an awning, and in the shade of this was a bed—a little camp-stretcher Chapenga knew the look of well enough, since at one time it had entered into his daily duties. But he could not yet distinguish who was lying on it. Beside it sat a tall man in white with dark hair. Chapenga recognised his general aspect, and still more the action with which he took off his helmet and ran his hand over a very curly head. It was Duvernier, cosmopolitan, elephant-hunter, and trader, who had started from Karonga's into the unknown a year ago.

Nearer the boat came. The dark man turned to the bed, beside which he was sitting, and seemed to be lifting something, and then with a tack and roll of the boat he disappeared

from view, and next time Chapenga made out anything clearly, he found that Duvernier was holding up another man so that he could see the buildings on shore—a man unshorn and haggard and ghastly yellow. But Chapenga would have known him anywhere, and forgot everyone and everything else, and sent a shrill cry across the water.

‘What’s that?’ asked Beckford.

‘There is a boy on the beach,’ said Duvernier. ‘I think he is shouting to his mates.’

‘I thought he said “Mzungu,”’ said the sick man feebly, ‘and I thought—it sounded—like Chapenga’s voice.’

‘Ah, your *diavoletto* that ran away from the Padres? Now, if that was my boy,’ said Duvernier cheerfully, ‘I say, Good rubbish of bad riddance. Eh, what?’

Beckford gave a faint attempt at a chuckle; he was not up to laughing.

‘But I’d like to know what became of him, poor little beggar!’

Duvernier had pulled out his binocular, and turned it on Chapenga.

‘And I say, that boy of yours—he is not born to be drowned. If that is not—what’s his name?—Chapenga, as large, as small—how you say?—as small as life, I will eat you, Beckford!’

‘Nonsense!’ said Beckford.

‘And why not? He turns up like a bad penny. These boys are always so. You will get no good out of this one until you see him happily hanged, and I will do it for you if you like.’

Duvernier had of old made the same offer to Chapenga direct, with the result that he was stored up in the latter’s memory as an amusing person and worth cultivating.

The boat ran ashore, and then, of course, there was confusion and shouting and rushing to and fro, and throwing about of ropes, and in the midst of it all a lean, dirty little scarecrow scrambled on board, and ran aft, and threw himself in a heap at the foot of the camp-bed, and clasped Beckford’s feet, sobbing and crying, ‘Mzungu! Mzungu!’

And Duvernier said :

‘Here’s your bad penny, you see. Now,

you little Sheitan, this Mzungu is ill, and if you make a noise you will make him more ill, and then perhaps he will die, and I will cut you into little pieces and throw you to the crocodiles.'

Chapenga sat up on his heels, and smiled through his tears with calm disdain.

'I am not your boy; I am Beckford's boy. Mzungu, I am your boy; you will not send me away again?'

Beckford, lying back on his pillow, looked long and attentively at the small, unsavoury apparition.

'Well, I'll see,' he said. 'Go and have a bath first, and then we'll talk.'

XIV

BECKFORD had broken down with a bad attack of bilious fever just about the time Torrance got back from Mweru. And Torrance packed him off at once in the whale-boat as the only chance of saving his life. Duvernier was then waiting for the steamer to take him South, along with his ivory, skins, horns, and other trophies; but when he heard of the whale-boat plan, he was suddenly seized with a fever of impatience to get away, and said he would go on with Beckford and leave the ivory to follow by the steamer when it came. Torrance caught at this. He could not leave the station, and he did not like the thought of sending the invalid off with only a couple of feather-headed boys to look after him. Not that in his heart he had much more confidence in Duvernier, whom he looked on as a careless, irresponsible, and

altogether un-British sort of person. Still, he was better than no one; and Torrance did not know (it was not important that he should) that he was really going at considerable personal inconvenience. But he liked Beckford, and was anxious about him. Having seen more than one comrade die in wild places of the earth, he was not eager to repeat the experience.

So Beckford was carried on board, and the broken-hearted Gyp borne back by force and shut up in Torrance's room, Jacob, who was entrusted with the execution of this order, suffering severely on the way.

It was not comfortable on the whale-boat, but all that one mortal could do to make it tolerable for another, who was not merely ill, but very ill indeed, Duvernier did. There were weary days and nights, when the steel boat seemed like a furnace and the camp-bed to be made of sacks of potatoes, and sleep would not come to Beckford, because there was something stretched tight inside his head, which kept him thinking about all sorts of things he didn't in the least want to think of, and would

not allow him to leave off. And the thing, whatever it was, kept growing tighter, till he felt that if it were not loosened soon he must die or go mad, and how to loosen it he could not tell. Duvernier dosed him according to the system he believed in—antipyrine till the temperature came down, and then quinine—and kept telling him cheerily that he was no worse as yet, and that once they reached Bandawe, and could have the doctor to him, he would be all right. And then he would direct all his ingenuity to the cooking of something which he imagined Beckford might possibly be induced to eat.

But one hot night Beckford, waking from something which was not sleep, though full of unpleasant dreams, all going, somehow, to the rhythm of the steady, maddening lap-lapping which the waves kept up against the plates of the boat, saw through the mosquito-curtain, which had been rigged up over him, Duvernier sitting with his face hidden in his hands. Something in his attitude, in the look of the bowed head and shoulders, came to Beckford with a little shock of surprise. He had never

yet known Duvernier to take anything seriously, never yet seen him sad or out of spirits. . . . His wits were not very clear just then ; but after a while he became vaguely conscious of two questions—whether he really was very near death, and why Duvernier should care so much.

At last the man lifted his head and looked up, and Beckford shut his eyes, feeling as though he had been watching what was not meant for him to see. He lay very still, and when Duvernier in the morning told him hopefully that he had been asleep he did not contradict. He noticed how haggard and worn Duvernier looked by daylight, and, knowing what he now knew, felt strangely drawn to this man whom a few days ago he had only thought of as a casual pleasant acquaintance.

‘We get to Bandawe to-morrow morning if this wind holds,’ said Duvernier, after consulting his pocket-compass and the *gadamu*. ‘You hang on so long, hein?—by the hide of your teeth—what is it? till you see the doctor ; and if you do not, if you go and kick the pail, Beckford, you know Torrance and all the com-

pany will say : " It is that brute Duvernier, that dam foreigner ! He lets Englishmen die because he is too much fool ! He don't care." You won't play it that low down, will you, Beckford ?

Duvernier had picked up his English all over the world, but chiefly in the Western States.

' They won't say *that*, old man,' said Beckford faintly. ' But I wish you'd tell me what you really think.'

' Eh ? I think three weeks from now you are at Blantyre Mission, getting well as fast as you can, and the Padre's wife feeding you with a spoon.'

' It's no use, Duvernier. Come here, now ;' and he laid a detaining hand, all bone and shockingly white skin, on the rough brown paw so incongruously adorned with two big gold rings. ' I want the truth. It's no use your trying to make me believe I'm going to pull through if I'm not ; and'—the weak voice dropped still lower—' if the time's come, and if it's right for me to go, I—I don't mind.'

'That is very good and pious,' grumbled Duvernier, 'but——'

And he suddenly broke off, and turned round with a look Beckford had never seen before. It was as if a mask had dropped from the sun-burnt, careless, handsome face. He lifted Beckford away from the uncomfortable pillows, and rested him, as he had a knack of doing, quite easily against his shoulder, and said :

'Look here : I speak straight.'

But straight speech, for some reason or other, did not seem to be quite easy, and he waited so long that Beckford whispered :

'Dear old man, what is it?'

'I speak straight,' repeated Duvernier, with an odd sort of click in his throat. 'I know you are not afraid. Why should you be? It will not cost much for masses to get *you* out of Purgatory. . . . But not now. You do not want to die now, Beckford; you have no right to die.'

The sick man murmured something, of which one could only catch 'so tired.'

'Tired!—we're all tired sometimes. See

you here : it is will, *will, will!* You need not die now—it is not your time, that is all rot—not unless you will. You have no right. You have your people at home ; and here, there is Torrance left with no one to help him. If you think you will get better, you will. That is all I have to say to you. You must wish to—you must *want* to—'*cré nom!* If you do not, I wash my——'

There was a pause.

'You hear me?'

'I really don't know that—it—matters.'

'It does matter. It is not easy—good. You come out here to take it easy, do you? If you want to do that, you promote companies and live in London. No, my dear : you promise me, and then I know you keep your word. Beckford, I am not much to you'—he spoke low and thickly—'but you are a great deal to me. Promise you will try, for my sake.'

'I'll try,' was whispered back.

'With all your strength?'

'With all my strength.'

'*Chabwino!* Now we turn these pillows,

and see if we can't make you a little comfortable.'

They reached Bandawe, and the doctor there looked very serious over Beckford, but said that, as he had pulled through so far, he might pull through to the end, only he ought to be got down to Blantyre as soon as possible; and there would be no steamer for weeks to come, perhaps months, and the whale-boat, he understood, was wanted back at Karonga's, while their own boat, he was sorry to say, was away just now. Then Duvernier rose up, looking as if he meant to take the roof off the house, and, with various words which the doctor thought best not to hear, said that, whether the whale-boat was wanted or not, South she should go—as far as Kotakota, at any rate—and then he would see if he could charter a dhow; and if not, he would take the boat on to Matope, and if the Company didn't like it, they might pay themselves out of his, Duvernier's, ivory, which he had left behind at Karonga's.

The weather was fine and the wind fair. It was the best season for sailing on the lake, and the doctor had no objection to offer to this plan.

In fact, he thought the patient would be better off than on the crowded deck of the *Ilala*, close to the heat and noise of the engines.

So, after a few days ashore, carefully tended in a cool, brick-floored room, and relieved (no small matter) by the knowledge that Duvernier was at last getting some rest, Beckford was carried on board again, with an additional mattress and every other portable comfort that the kind Bandawe people could think of. And with him came Chapenga, once more clothed and in his right mind, and a curious spectacle, with his newly-shaven head and lanky limbs, for he had grown out of knowledge since Beckford parted with him. However, he was still recognisable as the old Chapenga, though he no longer cared to answer to that name.

He told Duvernier so one day, but did not enlarge on his reasons. These were reserved for Beckford on the first occasion when the invalid was equal to an interview.

'Chapenga was a bad boy. There is no Chapenga now. I want to be good. Will you give me a new name, Mzungu?'

'I'll think about it,' said Beckford.

He gradually heard Chapenga's story in the intervals when he felt a little better—for the cooler weather and the fresh lake breezes were having their effect on him—and thought that on the whole it was true. Chapenga had, in fact, related the facts pretty much as they occurred, though (naturally enough) from his own point of view, suppressing none of his misdoings, and actually showing (which surprised Beckford) some sense that they were misdoings. It was too slight not to be real ; I mean, that if Chapenga had chosen to act the sanctimonious penitent, as he could have done without the slightest difficulty, had he been so minded, his professions would have been far more vehement. As it was, Beckford believed him, and discovered in due course, from information supplied by Worthington and Dr. Bassett, that he was right.

He was in no state to say much, but his occasional and tentative remarks were remembered and treasured up as the Archdeacon's sermons, I fear, never had been. One day he recalled Chapenga's request for a new name.

'I have thought of a name for you. You

shall be Wo-sa-nama (Who does not lie), and then you must always tell the truth if you want to keep your name. You see, when you told me about what you did at Chisimulu, and did not try to hide when you had done wrong, I was not angry with you, and so, you see——'

It is to be presumed that he was beginning to see. For the present he was a model boy. No one could have been quieter, handier, more attentive. He shifted the pillows most dexterously while Duvernier raised the patient, washed cups and glasses with scrupulous care, broke nothing, upset nothing, moved about like a cat, was willing, and wideawake at all hours of the day or night. He quite accepted the fact that he had under the circumstances to receive his orders from Duvernier, and always obeyed him unhesitatingly. But praise from that gentleman made him distinctly restive; he thought Duvernier was exceeding his powers.

The weather was still fine, but the winds were somewhat baffling, and the whale-boat was longer in reaching Kotakota than had been anticipated. When they got there, no

dhaw or other vessel was to be had, and the crew flatly refused to go farther. They had only engaged for Bandawe, and if they went on, they would get into trouble with Torrance on their return, which, to do them justice, they honestly believed.

Besides, there were disquieting rumours about. Makanjira's people were said to have crossed over to Rifu and to be on the war-path in that neighbourhood. Makanjira, moreover, was just then bitterly exasperated against the white men for interfering (as some had been doing, for their own hand—it was before the days of the Protectorate) with his slaving operations, and would not fail to attack and destroy the whole company if they fell in his way. Duvernier snorted at this like a war-horse, and showed them the whole battery of his rifles, heavy and light, asking whether they thought Makanjira had such guns as that. They replied—no one knows on what authority—that Makanjira had a cannon, and once more, with the gentle, impenetrable obstinacy of the African, declined to take the whale-boat one yard further South. Duvernier bade them all

go to that bourne whence no traveller returns (in this case, apparently, Karonga's), and leave him to navigate the boat by himself. Answer, as usual: 'lai, mzungu!' The boat was entrusted to their care, and they would not part with her. For three hours on end, Duvernier argued, wrangled, coaxed, threatened, promised over and over again that he would make it all right with Torrance, promised extra pay and a present into the bargain, even offered part payment in advance. They were immovable. Duvernier, moreover, did not like the looks of the Kotakota people. There were a good many Arabs and half-Arabs about, evidently slavers of the very worst stamp, and their sullen, lowering faces boded no good to the new arrivals. It was scarcely to be wondered at, that the crew insisted on leaving at once. If he had been alone, he would simply have gone ashore with his guns, and let the men do as they pleased. But Beckford?

He had tried unsuccessfully to keep the *mlandu* from Beckford's ears. Beckford sent Chapenga to call him, and demanded to know exactly what was the matter.

'It's no use trying to keep them if they've made up their minds to go,' he said when he heard. 'Who's the *gadamu*? Mulambo, isn't it? I know that fellow; you can't move him. He doesn't feel easy going one step beyond the Chief's orders, and he thinks he's done it already in coming here. The best thing we can do is to go ashore. Perhaps we can get a canoe in a day or two, if there are no dhows leaving before that.'

'You're talking too much,' said Duvernier, and administered a spoonful of brandy before offering objections in detail.

Beckford's only reply to the latter was :

'What Arabs are here just now? If I could get at Mwenyi Khamisi bin Omar, now, or Ali Baraka! I know them; they're decent fellows, and I think they'd help us. And I say, old man——' He looked up entreatingly and hesitated. Duvernier turned to him and took his hand with a glance of eager inquiry. 'Don't have a flare-up with the crew. Don't mind my saying it. I could never have kept my temper as you've done; but it's no use threatening them, and I dread what may happen

if you do. After all, it's only their honesty makes them so pig-headed.'

'All right, don't you worry,' said Duvernier, with a reassuring nod.

It appeared that Mwenyi Khamisi was not at Kotakota, and Ali Baraka was expected every day with ivory from up-country; but Ali's brother, Johari, was on the spot. It was finally arranged that Duvernier should go ashore to see him, the *gadamu* reluctantly agreeing to wait a day or two before returning with the boat to the North End. In consideration of this, Duvernier promised to write a letter for him to deliver to Torrance, containing a full explanation of all that had happened, and an order for extra pay for the trip from Bandawe to Kotakota, together with a *presenti* to every man in the crew. Besides this, Duvernier would provide them with a sack of rice as rations for the return journey, which, in proof of his good faith, he at once made his boy hand over to them from his own stores. It was plain that Mulambo did not like the arrangement, and was sincerely concerned for the safety of the two white men; but he agreed to it some-

what grumpily, and Duvernier thought he would be sufficiently alive to his own interests not to start without the letter for Torrance. So he went, attended by his boy, to seek Johari, carrying with him a complimentary present, all sorts of friendly messages, and—to certify that he really came from Beckford—an engraved signet-ring, which the latter had once received as a present from Ali Baraka.

The *gadamu*, convinced, probably, that the folly and obstinacy of white men were proof against all reason, sadly watched him ashore, and then turned and went aft without another word. Beckford, thankful for the comparative quiet, turned over on his bed, closed his eyes, and thought for a few happy moments that he was going to sleep. In a little while, however, he became aware that his brain and senses were painfully active. Every word the men said reached his ears, not distinctly enough to let him know the sense of what they were saying, but quite sufficiently to be a torture. He tried not to occupy his mind with their deliberations, telling himself that, at any rate, they would not sail away with him before Duvernier's return.

But they were evidently preparing for action of some sort. He grew more and more uneasy, and finally sent Chapenga to see what they were about.

Chapenga came back with a long face.

'They are getting ready to sail : they are not going to wait for the Mzungu.'

Beckford sat bolt upright in bed.

'Run to Johari's, Chapenga, and tell him at once.'

Chapenga looked blank.

'I do not know where Johari's is, Mzungu ; perhaps it is a long way. And if I go, they will hasten and get away with you before I come back.'

'Tell the *gadamu* I want him. I wish to goodness Duvernier would come back ! Have they forgotten he promised them a *kalata* for the white man at Karonga's ?'

'Mzungu, they will not wait ; they say a man's life is more than calico.'

'What does that man want ?'

It was one of the crew who came aft, picked up one of Duvernier's gun-cases, piled up at a spot just out of range of Beckford's scarcely

convalescent voice, and, taking no notice of any adjurations, walked forward with it.

'I heard them say, Mzungu, that they would put Duvernier's guns ashore ; they do not want to steal any of his things.'

'Go quickly and call Mulambo.' Beckford's voice went up quite shrill in his weakness and worry. 'Oh, where is Duvernier ?'

Duvernier, fretting with impatience, was sitting in Johari's *tembe*, listening to polite speeches, and trying to bring Johari to the point. Ali Baraka might be a decent fellow, and Beckford's friend ; but Johari was decidedly slippery, and Duvernier, remembering that as things stood he probably carried Beckford's life in his hand, weighed every word of his own before he spoke it, and watched every quiver of Johari's eyelids, and also everything that went on in the squalid veranda and dirty compound, as if he had eyes in the back of his head and all over him, and was all the time as cool and easy and polite as Johari himself—cooler, in fact, for Johari now and then got excited, but always pulled himself in again.

After an hour or more of it, without much

result one way or the other, Duvernier heard a slight disturbance among the slaves and miscellaneous loafers hanging about the entrance to the courtyard, and, looking up, saw Chapenga, breathless, dusty, scared, but with an air of tremendous importance all the same, elbowing his way through the midst of them. He hastened up to the veranda, and, taking not the smallest notice of Johari or his friends, thought fit to deliver his message in English.

‘Sir, the men take the boat ; they are gone. Mr. Beckford is ashore with all our things.’ Then, in a low voice : ‘ People of this place very bad, sir.’

Under ordinary circumstances Chapenga would not have cared to venture near any Arab settlement, though, as it happened, there was no one here who knew him. But he had completely forgotten everything, except Beckford deserted on Kotakota beach, when he set out alone to look for Duvernier.

Duvernier took a somewhat hasty leave, and ran down to the beach with the two boys at his heels. The whale-boat, beating up against the wind, was dancing over the waves, already

beyond hail. Duvernier stood still, and shook his fist at her, and cursed loud and deep in Spanish.

'Here, Mzungu!' whispered Chapenga, and led the way to a rough shelter of grass and matting propped on sticks, beneath which were the camp-bed with Beckford on it, a miscellaneous pile of luggage, and all the guns.

Beckford smiled faintly up at him.

'So Chapenga found you?' he said.

'Ha!' snapped Duvernier grimly, 'so you are alive? You are in your right senses? Good! We are thankful! Where is the thermometer?'

Chapenga had put it carefully away in the medicine-chest. Duvernier produced it and took Beckford's temperature before he would listen to any explanations, and, finding the same lower than he expected, gave a sigh of relief, felt the pulse, and then made inquiries. It appeared that Beckford had insisted on the men's putting him ashore, that they had carefully landed every item of his and Duvernier's property, and also the sack of rice already mentioned—since they had no intention of earning it—had

put up a shelter over him, had impressed a casual Angoni boy to keep guard over him while Chapenga went in search of Duvernier, and had finally taken a respectful leave.

‘And now,’ said Duvernier, ‘what to do?’

But Johari and various other gentlemen in long white shirts and embroidered jackets had by this time appeared on the scene. Beckford recognised Johari, and Johari greeted him with effusion, and everybody was immensely polite, houses and slaves and property of all sorts being offered with Oriental lavishness and as politely declined in good set terms. But in the end a compromise was arrived at. The party were to be quartered in a corner of Ali Baraka's unoccupied *tembe*, and Duvernier would arrange the terms with him when he came. Anything was better than the broiling sun and filthy rubbish-heaps of the lake-shore—the place had already suffered from Arab occupation—and he got his invalid carried up as soon as possible, and installed in a place which he and the two boys did their best to render habitable.

Two nights and a day did Beckford endure

amid the dust and smells and rats and fleas, and worse than fleas, of that stifling *tembe*; and be it remembered that Ali Baraka's was about the cleanest house in the place. Duvernier began to fear, though he never breathed a doubt on the subject, that even strength of will might fail to pull a man through under some circumstances. It made him tenderer and more unwearying in his care than ever, and he sat up through those two nights, throwing things at the rats with cheerful alacrity, while Beckford turned uneasily on his mattress and sighed for Gyp. It was not alone Beckford's illness that kept him anxious through those weary watches. His revolver was loaded and ready to his hand, and he had looked carefully to his other guns, and made the boys oil them, in case they should be needed. The more he saw of Johari, the less he liked him. The place was full of slaves waiting to be shipped down to Mponda's, or across the lake, and the Arabs were suspicious and jealous, dreading English interference, and ready to resent, but not quite knowing when or how to expect it. In spite of all vigilance, a lot of

stores and two of the guns were stolen. One man insolently laid claim to Chapenga, as a runaway slave of his own, and though Duvernier, by the exercise of patience and self-control, secured a peaceable ending to that incident, he feared it was but one indication of more unpleasantness to come, and his heart was heavier than he cared to show.

XV

THE crisis came on the second day. Johari came up and said that he had just secured a splendid canoe, with sixteen paddles, which was now at the landing-place, to take them down to Rifu, whence it would be an easy matter to reach Mponda's in a dhow. He likewise offered the services of his slaves to carry Beckford down to the landing-place. Would Duvernier come and inspect the craft? No, Duvernier said; he would wait till the carriers came, and he and his friend would go down to the *gombe* together. At least, he could send the boys on with some of the luggage? No, still more emphatically; the boys were wanted here. And Johari went.

Duvernier went to his gun-cases, took out his two lightest rifles, and gave them to Chapenga and his own boy Sitima to carry,

while he kept the little double Express for himself, and strapped together a few of the most necessary things, telling the boys to sling them over their shoulders. Then he went and sat down beside Beckford's bed, and they looked at each other, and for the first time in Beckford's experience, Duvernier had nothing to say, but hid his face in his hands. Beckford was the first to speak.

‘Do you think Johari's played us false?’

The answer, indirect, came like a gasp of pain.

‘My dear! Torrance should never have let you go with me!’

‘Don't be a fool! But look sharp, before Johari comes back. You and the boys start out for the *gombe*. If it is as you think, you might fight your way through, perhaps, and get hold of a canoe; and if it's all right, you can come back for me. Just give me my revolver out of that portmanteau, will you?’

Duvernier fixed a cold, contemptuous stare on him.

‘Old man, don't waste time. There's no sense in throwing your life away——’

'If you do not be quiet, Beckford, my faith! I give you a dose of bromide, and then you will be quiet, if you like it or not, and they carry you out like a sack.' He drew his hands gently from Beckford's clasp, walked over to the last gun-case, and, picking up the remaining weapon, carried it into the veranda, where he laid it on one stone and smashed the lock beyond possibility of repair with another. The boys ejaculated 'Isi!' and stood open-mouthed at this act of sacrilege. 'So! that is my present to Johari,' he said.

Johari came with the carriers. They lashed poles to the sides of Beckford's stretcher, and carried him shoulder-high, two on a side. Duvernier walked beside him, followed by the men with the rest of the loads; it seemed hopeless, and indeed useless, to look after them.

Johari did not take them down to the usual landing-place, but struck off by a path through the Bush towards the lake-shore, south of the town. It was as Duvernier had thought. Shots—some of them from improved, quick-firing rifles—came pattering out of grass and scrub. The bearers halted, put down their

loads, and several ran away. Duvernier, without a moment's hesitation, turned to Johari, and shot him through the head.

'Chapenga! Sitima! Stand one on each side, and shoot every man who offers to touch your Mzungu!' He fired again and again, wherever he saw anything moving in the scrub. 'Who will come to fight with me? I am Ngadamika, who kills elephants! I have the strong war-medicine! Who will come and fight with Ngadamika, who eats up buffaloes?'

Chapenga and Sitima fired, as they were told, rather wildly, but not without effect. Some of Johari's men bolted; others, slaves impressed for this service, cowered on the ground, too frightened even to run. Duvernier kicked them in the ribs, one by one.

'Get up and carry the white man, or you shall be killed as I have killed Johari.' He fired once more at a puff of smoke from the bushes, and shouted, 'I am Ngadamika!'

The firing out of the Bush was very wild, hopelessly so, or something would surely have hit the stretcher; as it was, Beckford never got a scratch. Duvernier was hit on the back of

the head by a slug, and had his coat-sleeve torn by another ; but the ammunition was as peculiar as the marksmanship. The poor slaves, in terror of the more immediate danger, picked up the stretcher and went on ; the firing became intermittent, and finally ceased, and the little party, coming suddenly round a projecting rock, saw the lake in front of them, and two canoes on the beach. Duvernier drove the carriers before him in an agony of impatience.

‘ Quick now—quick ! Take the mattress off and lay it in the bottom of the canoe. Chapenga and Sitima, jump in—quick ! Now, you Sheitans—one, two, altogether—launch her !’ and she grated down the sand, Duvernier pushing with all his strength astern, and three men on each side. Just as she touched the water, there was a yell behind. ‘ Jump in, and paddle for your lives !’ Duvernier shouted. ‘ Paddle, I say, paddle, or I’ll shoot you !’

He stood on the water’s edge, and turned back, rifle in hand. He had still a few cartridges left. A shot or two rattled from the top of the slope, but spears were being thrown now ;

the ammunition was clearly almost exhausted. He fired, and picked off one of the advancing mob—then another—and another. One or two arrows whistled through the air, but none fell near him. His last shot was fired when the foremost of the enemy were still some two hundred yards away.

Duvernier flung his gun into the lake, kicked off his shoes, deliberately took off his jacket, and, rolling it into a ball, sent it defiantly after the gun, and then he plunged into the water. The paddlers, in mortal fear, had obeyed him and done their best. The canoe was well out of range of any shot the pursuers could have sent after it, and Beckford, kneeling upon the mattress, supported by Chapenga, was straining his eyes to see what had become of his friend.

Duvernier was a magnificent swimmer, and had struck out boldly, encumbered as he was. But the Arabs had reached the landing-place at last, and they had Johari to avenge. Spears fell into the water before and behind him. A few more shots were fired, falling wide. But at last a young giant of a Tonga, more accurate of eye than the rest, sent a heavy spear hurtling

through the air, and Duvernier dived like a harpooned whale, while those on shore raised a shout of triumph that Ngadamika was vanquished at last. Beckford turned deadly sick, and collapsed into a senseless heap. Poor Sitima gave a great and bitter cry. The paddlers, who had slackened speed, and finally stopped altogether when they found themselves out of range, saw Johari's people launching the other canoe, and began to paddle again with a will. But Chapenga held up his hand and cried 'Stop!' And then he shook the wailing Sitima and bade him look.

Not a dozen yards away a black head, curly as a retriever's, showed above the water, with a trail of blood behind it. He came nearer. He was almost exhausted, but still he had a little strength left. Chapenga caught up a paddle and held it out to him, and then he and Sitima helped the boatmen to pull him in without upsetting the clumsy craft. And then he shook his gun at them, and cried, 'Paddle! paddle quickly southward, or I'll shoot you!' And they bent to their work with a will, and were soon far out of sight of Kotakota beach.

The other canoe had been launched, indeed, but never started. Chapenga had, in all the hurry of embarking, found time to remove her paddles to his own craft, which explains why he had a spare one to hold out to Duvernier.

Beckford, painfully coming to himself, in a cramped position, and with water being splashed in his face, heard an exultant whisper close at his ear : ' Mzungu, Ngadamika is safe !'

But when he could lift his head enough to see in the bottom of the boat a very limp and ' fushionless ' Ngadamika, in a dripping, blood-stained shirt, and when he further realized that they were afloat in a cranky craft, with a crew of six unwilling conscripts, without provisions, almost without arms, and hopelessly out of reach of the nearest European habitation, it seemed to him, as it had seemed to Duvernier earlier in the day, that there was nothing left now but to die together.

Sitima was chafing his master's hands, and trying to bring him back to life. Beckford managed to raise himself and get near enough to take hold of one hand and make feeble efforts

to rub warmth into it. Whether in consequence of these exertions or not, he opened his eyes in a little while, muttered, 'It is will—*will* you want!' and closed them again.

'Not this time,' whispered Beckford, bending close to him—'not now, for either of us! Say good-bye, old man.'

But Chapenga had sprung up in wild excitement, and the eyes of the crew were eagerly following his pointing hand, till they rested on a tiny trail of smoke on the far southern horizon. Neither Duvernier nor Beckford could see it then, or long afterwards, and when Chapenga first called their attention to the rhythm of the paddles throbbing far out over the calm water, they had likewise to take it on trust for a time. But the very effort steadied the flickering consciousness, and both of them managed to keep their hold on it till they were hauled up on the *Ilala's* deck. The *Ilala's* captain decided to turn back, and run day and night for Matope. Two invalided Europeans, whose lives hung in the balance—not exactly average lives, either, it would appear—and six liberated slaves, formed something like a reason. And so there were

two to be nursed at Blantyre Mission instead of one, as Duvernier had predicted; but both were made successful cures of, and both, so it was said afterwards, contributed to this result by having exceedingly useful boys. When this was told to the Archdeacon, it never occurred to him to inquire who the boys were.

I did not come in for the experiences of those pioneering days, my acquaintance with the Protectorate only dating from the comparatively modern and prosaic era of 1896. But in that year I paid a long visit to Beckford's plantation in the West Shire district, and admired the evergreen gardens irrigated from a rushing mountain stream, the coffee and the sugar and the indiarubber, the sleek cattle and the long-haired goats, and was entertained in the most charming way by Mrs. Beckford. Beckford's Donna is tall and thin, with an eyeglass and curly black hair. She speaks Chinyanja with a genuine New England accent, and plays on the *limba* (Beckford imported one when he was married) in a way little short of divine. It was she who told me the story of Beckford's Capitão,

a slight, wiry little man, active and bright-eyed as a bird, who used to come to the veranda in his long white shirt, and stand, demurely respectful, with folded hands, to receive the Mzungu's instructions. His name since his baptism is Daniel Wosanama; but, for my part, I find it impossible to think of him as anything but Chapenga, and Chapenga I have called him all through this story, in spite of his expressed wish to drop the name. He has recently been married, and his wife is a short, round, plump, laughing girl, with a droll, upturned cast of feature, and an expression, if anyone may say so, of subdued impudence, suggesting that she, too, may have been an *enfant terrible* in her day. Her name is Jerusalem, which is, as Carlyle would say, significant of much. But hers is another story.

Gyp I did not see. She had died at a good old age, but her memory is tenderly cherished, for I was shown her grave. And she has left plenty of descendants behind her, for the Kapeni plantation when I was there seemed alive with fox-terriers, most of whom were white, with one black ear.

GLOSSARY OF NATIVE AND OTHER WORDS

*When not otherwise stated, the language is Chinyanja
(Mang'anja).*

ANÁSALA (Arabic). Mohammedans. This is, curiously enough, derived from *Nuzrani*=a Christian. Originally applied by the Arabs to the Portuguese of Mozambique, it was transferred by the inland natives to them, because they, too, came from the coast.

BANGO. A reed or cane of which mats are made.

BOMA (Swahili). A fortified camp.

BWANA (Swahili). Sir, master.

CÁPITÃO (Portuguese). A headman or overseer.

CHABWINO. 'Very good !'

CHE. An exclamation of surprise. *Che* in Yao is a title prefixed to names either of men or women, and equivalent to Mr., Mrs., or Miss—as, Che Lumbalo, Che Wilaga. A European doctor is often spoken of as Che Dotolo.

CHIKOTI (Portuguese). A whip.

CHINANGWA (Yao). Manioc, the root of which is eaten both raw and cooked.

CHOKA. 'Go away !'

CHUMA (Yao). Beads ; hence wealth in general.

244 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

DOMNA (Portuguese) is the name given to all European ladies.

DÓTOLO = the English word 'doctor.'

FATH'HA (Arabic). The first chapter of the Koran, which is the Mohammedan confession of faith.

GADAMU (from the Arabic *muqadam*, a headman). The pilot, or headman, of a boat's crew. In river navigation he usually stands in the bow with a long pole to take the soundings.

GOMBE. The river-bank.

IAI. No.

ISI. An exclamation of surprise.

KABAWI. A hawk.

KAYA. Perhaps, It may be, but used to mean 'I don't know.'

KO. An interrogative ejaculation, about equivalent to 'Indeed?' 'Is it so?'

KUCHESISA (Yao). An open shed under which people cook their food and sit round the fire talking. The boys attached to any European establishment usually have one (distinct from their sleeping hut), where they spend the evenings.

KUCHEZA. To come and talk with, pay a friendly visit, etc.

LIMBA. A native musical instrument, but applied to a piano or harmonium.

LIPENGA (Yao). A trumpet or bugle. On plantations a bugle is blown at daybreak, and at other times as a signal for beginning and leaving off work.

MALONDA. Food, etc., brought for sale.

MASASA. A temporary shelter made of grass.

MATONGWE; singular **LITONGWE** (Yao). A wild fruit, perhaps that of a species of *Strychnos*.



- MFITI** ; plural **AFITI**. Wizard.
- MLANDU** ; correct plural **MILANDU**, though Europeans frequently talk of *milandus*. A complaint, quarrel, or lawsuit ; often used in a general sense for 'affair' or 'business,' like the West Coast expression 'palaver.'
- MOA**. Native beer made of millet ; Swahili *pombe*.
- MSHENZI** ; plural **WASHENZI** (Swahili). Heathen—*i.e.*, non-Mohammedan ; also equivalent to 'savage' or 'bush-nigger.'
- MSUKU**. A large forest tree (*Napaca Kirkü*) bearing sweet, juicy fruits about the size of apricots, called *masuku*.
- MTOTO** (Swahili). Child. *Mtoto wangu* = my child.
- MULUNGU**. God.
- MWAVI**. The poison given to people suspected of witchcraft.
- MZUNGU** ; plural **AZUNGU**. White man. *Mzungu wamkulu* (the great white man) is the head of an establishment, commander of an expedition, etc.
- NKANDWE**. A small kind of fox or jackal.
- NKOKWE**. A corn-bin made of basket-work, and covered with a conical thatched roof.
- NSIMA**. Porridge made of *ufa*, or maize-flour ; Swahili *ugali*.
- PA LI BE**. 'He (she, it, etc.) is not there,' or 'there is not.'
- PA LI BE KANTU**. Literally, 'There is not a little thing' ; is equivalent to, 'I don't care' or 'It does not matter.'
- PANSI**. Down, on the ground.
- POMBE** (Swahili). See *Moa*.
- TAWA**. To run away.
- TEMBE** (Swahili). An Arab house built round a courtyard.
- TENGA-TENGA MEN**. Carriers.
- TEWERA**. A piece of calico worn round the waist.
- UFA**. Maize-flour. The grain is first pounded in a wooden mortar, and then ground fine on stones.

246 CHAPENGA'S WHITE MAN

UGALI (Swahili). See *Nsima*.

ULENDO. A journey, or the people going on a journey;
hence a party of travellers, a caravan.

YAMBO (Swahili). Good-day.

All these words (except two or three borrowed from foreign languages, which have the accent marked), are accented on the penultimate syllable, and the vowels sounded as in Italian, but the consonants exactly as written in English.

THE END





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